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THESIS

THE ROLE OF THE ULAMA IN SHIITE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: BAHRAIN, LEBANON, AND IRAQ

by

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June 2005

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13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

The Shiite *ulama* have become politically active in past decades, beginning in the 1960s-70s with the articulation of the new ideology that empowered the Iranian Revolution. Though a significant portion of the *ulama* retained their quietist tradition, enough felt motivated by *wilayet e-faqih* to become a major force in the political landscape. The *ulama* were particularly well suited to lead a successful social movement. Shiite tradition and symbology, once released from the bonds of quietism, were perfectly suited to motivate a struggle for justice. Despite the *ulama*'s successful leadership, they are most influential when they are part of an underground opposition movement. The three case studies demonstrate that when movements reach a certain level of success, the *ulama* tend to retreat back to their studies. While many significant *ulama* continue to pay lip service to the *wilayet e-faqih,* many have also admitted that it is not practical in their country's particular circumstance. This is not to say that they are not influential, but that they prefer to let others perform daily political tasks. The scowling, turbaned *'alim* is not necessarily the uncontrolled voice of radicalism bent upon founding an Islamic state.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

The brooding image of Shiite clerics glaring threateningly from under black turbans has become a symbol of radicalism in the West. From the seductive charisma of Ayatollah Khomeini to the fiery vitriol of Muqtada al-Sadr, or concern over the behind the scenes influence of Ayatollah Sistani, the role of the *ulama*[1] in Shiite mass movements is often assumed but has not been thoroughly examined. Who are these scholars? What ideological and historical precedents empower their bid for political influence? Do they exert control over the movements or are they jumping on the bandwagon to avoid marginalization? This paper argues that a paradigm shift occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s that reached its zenith with the Iranian revolution. This shift cast off centuries of tradition and legitimized Shiite political activism generally, and *ulama* involvement specifically. Shiite grievances emerged as a result of politically exclusive and indiscriminately repressive regimes. The Shiite hierarchy was uniquely situated to provide an *in situ* mobilization structure, charismatic and experienced leaders, and a vast wealth of symbols with which to frame an opposition movement. As an elite group, the Shiite *ulama* operated as movement entrepreneurs, recognizing (and in some cases provoking) structural and perceptual shifts in their respective political opportunity structures.[2] Wielding their often significant resources and meaningful frames, the *ulama* seized what was perceived as favorable political opportunities in order to achieve their goals.

In the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom the sectarian balance of power, between Sunnis and Shiites, is a central factor for the propagation of Middle East peace. Current events in Iraq seem to emphasize the leadership of mass movements by the Shiite *ulama*. Study of historical trends through the lens of social movement theory will analyze

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[1] The term *ulama* (singular *'alim*) collectively refers to the members of the Islamic religious establishment including scholars, preachers, and teachers. Though the terms cleric and clergy are not completely analogous with *ulama*, they have been used extensively in western studies and I use them synonymously in this work.

[2] Charles Kurzman, "Structural Opportunity and Perceived Opportunity in Social-Movement Theory: The Iranian revolution of 1979," American Sociological Review 61, no. 1 (February 1996): 154.

the veracity of such conclusions and attempt to not only establish the degree of *ulama* control, but also the mechanisms by which such control is exercised. Understanding this relationship is critical to the formulation of accurate policy in countries with Shiite majorities, such as Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain, as well as those with sizeable minorities such as Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.

The Shiite *ulama* have become more influential in mass movements since the Iranian Revolution. While influence has increased, this does not mean that the *ulama* have complete control. A wide array of secular organizations compete with religious activists to varying degrees of success. Nevertheless, political activism by religious scholars has certainly increased over the past three decades, largely enabled by authoritarian governments that exclude and repress opposition parties from meaningful participation in government. When opposition movements are prevented from joining the mainstream they tend to migrate to peripheral areas outside the state's direct control. Religious and professional organizations often fit this bill. As the self-designated and traditional guardians of their communities *vis-à-vis* the state, the *ulama* have taken over the reigns of Shiite opposition. These activist *ulama* have responded to the demands of their followers to take action. This development advances the idea within social movement theory that movement entrepreneurs shape their platform in response to constituent input. However, there is a limit to these redefinitions. The more the actions deviate from their traditional base of authority, the more the *ulama* undermine their legitimacy in the community over the long-term.

This introduction is divided into four parts. First, I examine the traditional and ideological role of the *ulama* and the institution of the *marja'iya* in order to establish a baseline for the comparison of later developments, survey the schools of thought in the Shiite community, and to contrast various *ulama* from their contemporaries. Second, the key influential role of the Iranian revolution is briefly discussed, concluding that its major contributions to the *umma*[3] are in its *demonstration effect* and *political and material support*. Third is a literature review to survey the significant sources relied upon for this study. Lastly, I present an overview of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

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[3] The term *umma* refers to the universal community of Muslims.

2

A. THE *MARJA'IYA* AND SHIITE POLITICAL THOUGHT

1. The Marja'iya and taqlid

The political environment of early Shiites had a profound effect on the formation and evolution of their *ulama*.[4] The development of Sunni jurisprudence occurred in the context of a Sunni state. The Sunni *ulama*'s legal role was subsumed by the state and jurists became judges by political appointment. The Sunni jurist's authority, therefore, was derived from the state and owed little to his actual credentials as a scholar. Religion and politics were integrated and the line separating them blurred. Conversely, the Shiite *ulama* formed in a Sunni-dominated state. As a persecuted minority, the Shiites had no involvement in official politics and their system of jurisprudence was founded outside the political sphere. The existence of the Shiite community became bifurcated, consisting of the spiritual realm of their religion and the profane external environment of their daily lives.[5]

The Shiite Imamate doctrine is central to the distinction between the spiritual and profane realms. Shiites profess that sovereignty over mankind is exclusively the province of God. As God's infallible representatives on earth, the Prophet and the Imams legitimately exercised authority on His behalf. All the governments which came after those of the Prophet and the Imams are therefore illegitimate.[6]

After the Twelfth Imam went into occultation and his exertion of political authority effectively ended, the Shiite community was left without legitimate leadership. The Imam is expected to return at the end of days and restore justice to the world. As the messianic nature of the Hidden Imam became more developed, the nature of the Imamate transformed from a religio-political character to an almost exclusively religious one. Simultaneously, given that the Shiites did not exercise political power in any event, the *ulama* distanced themselves from politics as a realm beyond their mandate.[7]

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[4] Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 191-2.

[5] Ibid., 192.

[6] Joseph Eliash, "Misconceptions regarding the Juridical Status of the Iranian 'Ulama,'" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10, No. 1 (Feb., 1979): 21.

[7] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 192.

A distinction arose concerning the legitimacy of government, creating in effect degrees of acceptability. In this light, a Shiite regime is not necessarily legitimate, since it is not governed by the Imam, but it is composed of believers who recognize that fact and attempt to adhere as closely as possible to the ideal state. On the other hand, a regime of non-believers, especially the Sunni, is by definition committed to "wrongdoing." The regime's actual behavior is irrelevant to their status as wrongdoers.[8] From this logic came the ruling that Shiites seeking conflict resolution from a Sunni judge, as the legal arm of the state, were as guilty of wrongdoing as the Sunnis themselves. Thereafter, Shiites sought Shiite *ulama* to resolve disputes and accepted only their rulings. Two key factors emerged from this development. First, the Shiite's relationship with an *'alim* was a voluntary one; he could choose the one he respected and whose rulings he would accept. Second and most importantly, the authority of the Shiite *ulama* was a function of their religio-legal learning and independent from state appointment.[9]

Shiites remain firmly committed to the core Muslim belief that each individual is required to read and interpret the scripture for him/herself in order to accept and understand the faith's fundamental principles. Blind imitation of others in the practice of religion is therefore prohibited. There was increasing recognition over time, however, especially as religious law became more complex, that the average person could not devote the time and effort necessary to fully comply with his religiously mandated obligations. *Taqlid*, or emulation, emerged as a solution to this dilemma.[10] While all believers are expected to rely on themselves for understanding the fundamentals of the faith, it became permissible to consult with experts (the *mujtahids*) for specific legal or procedural guidance.[11] Lay worshippers came to follow a specific scholar whose learning was sufficient to guide the emulator, the *muqallid,* along the righteous path. This interdependent relationship between *marja'* and *muqallid*, formalized through the payment of alms, or the *sahm al-imam,* has become a central fixture of the Shiite

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[8] Eliash, "Misconceptions regarding the Juridical Status of the Iranian 'Ulama,'" 21.

[9] Ibid., 13.

[10] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 175-76.

[11] Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 138-39.

religious hierarchy. The amount of alms an *'alim* receives is often, along with the acceptance of his peers, a key factor in determining his status as a *marja'* and his relative position in the hierarchy.[12]

Choosing a *marja'* to follow is an important obligation for Shiites. This is not a choice to be taken lightly. A potential *muqallid* must read the commentaries and other works of various *marja'* and choose the one he feels most closely fits with his own interpretation of the faith. If in depth study is not practical, as is often the case, the *muqallid* is required to consult with knowledgeable people that s/he trusts who can help him come to an informed decision.[13]

The institution of the *marja'iya*, that being a single *mujtahid* whose religious authority exceeds all others and therefore is the recognized leader of the Shiite community, is a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging only in the mid 19th century. Even well into the 20th century the primary loyalty of most Shiites was to local *sayyids* or *sheikhs* rather than the more educated religious establishment of the shrine cities. This was particularly true of the Arab Shiites in more remote areas. Walbridge argues that even into the 1980s the concept of the *marja'* was unfamiliar to many Lebanese Shiites, especially from the Bekaa.[14] One probable cause for the basic inability of one *marja'* to assert hegemonic influence over the international Shiite community seems to have been the difficulty of communication. Advancing technology has allowed the *ulama* to reach a much wider audience than they could with direct influence and word of mouth. Audio tapes of Khomeini's sermons were widely disseminated and extremely popular prior to the Iranian revolution, greatly aiding his ascent to temporal power.[15] The internet has made the Shiite leadership even more accessible, with notable *marja'* maintaining websites that include not only their published works, but also a question and answer function that allows followers to solicit the *marja'*'s opinion on unanswered or confusing

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[12] Linda S. Walbridge, "Introduction: Shi'ism and Authority" in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.

[13] Walbridge, "The Counterreformation," 231-33.

[14] Walbridge, "Introduction," 6.

[15] Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 92-3.

subjects.[16] The increasing ability to reach wider audiences is likely to continue the trend toward consolidation, strengthening the *marja'iya* as an institution and focusing emulation upon one, or possibly a handful, of well respected *marja'*.

2.   Traditional Thought

Traditional Shiite thought asserts that only God can legitimately exercise sovereignty over man. The Imams, considered to be infallible, were God's terrestrial representatives who led the community, politically and spiritually, in his name. When the Twelfth Imam went into occultation, this role eventually fell upon the *ulama*, religious scholars who, while as fallible as any other person, had attained a sufficient degree of religio-legal knowledge to guide the community until the day of his return.[17]

Shiite *ulama* had traditionally argued against attaining temporal power. Until the Safavid ascension in Iran in 1501, Shiites had constituted a minority operating within Sunni dominated states. Simply put, political power was not theirs to have and thus a moot question. As the Safavids converted Iran to Shi'ism, they exerted significant influence over the *ulama*. The Safavids gained control over and centralized the distribution of religious endowments and official appointments. Under Shiite rule the *ulama* were appointed to government offices, such as judgeships as well as religious posts such as each city's *Sheikh al-Islam*: the city's senior religious official.[18] When the Safavid gave way to the Qajar dynasty, the *ulama* began to assert more independence from the state.[19] Whereas the Safavids could draw upon their own religious charisma to legitimize their rule, the Qajars relied upon the *ulama* to provide their support. The *ulama* initially did so, but as a result gained increasing autonomy over time. By the early 19th century, the *ulama* had separated to such a degree that Iran effectively operated under a dual system, the state and the religious hierarchy.

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[16] For example, Ayatollah Sistani's website http://www.sistani.org (accessed March 10, 2005) and Ayatollah Fadlallah's website http://www.bayynat.org (accessed March 10, 2005).

[17] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 170-71, 192-95.

[18] Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 124-25.

[19] Said Amir Arjomand, "Millennial Beliefs, Hierocratic Authority, and Revolution in Shi'ite Iran," in *The Political Dimensions of Religion*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 221.

Traditional *ulama* such as Ayatollahs Hakim, Kho'i, and Sistani have generally followed the quietist path, devoting themselves primarily to scholarship and charitable works. Operating within repressive Ba'athi Iraq is of course one possible explanation: to actively pursue a political agenda would have likely been suicidal. This factor does not explain their quietism completely. A key component in justifying the lack of political activism was the Shiite doctrine of *entezar*.[20]

Entezar, the millenarian expectation of the Hidden Imam's return, is commonly held to be the primary source of Shiite political quietism.[21] As discussed previously, the Shiites hold that the only legitimate and just government is that of the Twelfth Imam, and that until his return any government is inherently illegitimate. Since just government is impossible so long as the occultation continues, it effectively passes from the political to religious sphere and out of the hands of mortals. In practice, this belief propagated passive acceptance of the status quo; since humanity is incapable of just government, the present is a trial to be endured until the Mahdi's return. Popular understanding of *entezar* held that the attainment of justice, through the mechanism of the Mahdi's return, could only happen when the world was filled with injustice. This logic suggests that striving to create a more just society actually delays the Mahdi's return[22] This ruled out political activism as a method of improving one's life, a belief that clearly created friction within the increasingly politically aware Shiite community of the 20th century. Ayatollah Khomeini sought to undermine the pacifying effects of *entezar* in order to achieve his political goals.

3.   Khomeini

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini transformed modern Shiite politics. The *ulama*, particularly in Iran, had become politically involved at various points in the past, but

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[20] Haggay Ram, "Exporting Iran's Islamic Revolution: Steering a Path between Pan-Islam and Nationalism," Terrorism and Political Violence 8, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 8.

[21] Hamid Enayat, "Iran: Khumayni's concept of the 'Guardianship of the Jurisconsult," in *Islam in the Political Process*, ed. James P. Piscatori (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 174.

See also Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), 25.

[22] Ram, "Exporting Iran's Islamic Revolution," 8-9.

these periods of activism were usually tied to a specific issue with a particular short-term goal in mind. As discussed above, traditions of quietism, fueled by *entezar*, had established norms that discouraged direct involvement of the clerical class in governance. Khomeini built upon Shari'ati's rejection of *entezar*, producing a political philosophy that he called the *wilayet e-faqih*: the rulership of the jurisprudent.

A fundamental aspect of Shiite Islam is the doctrine of the Imamate. As discussed above, God designated an Imam to guide the *umma,* impart divine law, and ensure that the people remain on the virtuous path. Shiites assert that the Prophet Muhammad designated 'Ali as the first Imam. Each Imam would then in turn designate his successor, who as God's mortal representative would enjoy protection from error, attaining infallibility.[23] When the Twelfth Imam went into occultation, the *ulama* accumulated many of the Imam's functions, including interpretation of the law and arbitration of disputes. They asserted a truncated form of the Imam's authority in which they collected tithes and exercised trusteeship over those who were unable to care for themselves, such as orphans and the handicapped.[24] They refused the complete authority of the Imam on grounds of incompetence since they did not possess one of the necessary prerequisites of the Imam, infallibility. Khomeini's novel contribution, the *wilayet e-faqih*, expanded this limited role to equal that of the Imam for the duration of his absence.[25]

The debate over the *ulama*'s proper role in society has been extensive. Khomeini did not originate the idea of an *ulama*-ruled state, but he resurrected and refined old arguments.[26] Unlike previous incarnations, Khomeini's conception of government placed its emphasis on the nature of the leader. The *faqih*, in this framework, was the supreme leader and guardian of the state rather than *primus inter pares* on a governing council or other committee-like body.

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[23] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 155.

[24] This limited authority is called the *al-wilaya al-khassa.* For a detailed discussion see: Hamid Mavani, "Analysis of Khomeini's Proofs for al-Wilaya al-Mutalqa (Comprehensive Authority) of the Jurist," in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 183.

[25] Ibid., 183-4.

[26] Enayat, "Iran: Khumayni's concept of the 'Guardianship of the Jurisconsult," 160-61.

Khomeini divided the guardianship functions of the Imams into two spheres, existential and relative.[27] The existential sphere is the exclusive domain of the Prophet and the Imams; it is the spiritual realm whose understanding is reserved for these eminent and infallible leaders. The relative realm consists of the administration and guidance of the community, both political functions and steering the people toward the straight path morally. In this area even the fallible could excel, and the best suited to this task is the *faqih*.

The jurisdiction of the *ulama* to exercise guardianship over several areas received almost universal acceptance in the Shiite community. These areas included the guardianship of those incapable of handling their own affairs such as orphans, widows, or the insane; guardianship over the resources of the religious community such as mosques, shrines, charity funds, and education; the ability to act as judges and rule on issues of religious law; and the guardianship of the community's general welfare.[28] Khomeini's assertion that an additional area of competence was included in the *ulama*'s domain, that of direct political control, was controversial. Most Shiites accepted the limited role of the ulama in political activism. In many cases the *ulama* led protests and social movements in order to correct an unjust situation or otherwise petition the government on the behalf of the public welfare. Additionally, and often in conjunction with the above, the *ulama* led movements to protect religion and culture from internal or external threat.[29] The actual exercise of political power lay beyond these widely accepted norms.

Many of Khomeini's critics based their arguments upon the works of the prominent 19th century *'alim* Sheikh Murtada Ansari (d. 1864). A *mujtahid* who is held in high esteem, Sheikh Ansari basically held to the aforementioned accepted areas of traditional guardianship.[30] He based these arguments on the belief that the exertion of authority over others was the exclusive province of the Prophet and the Imams and that this mandate did not extend to the *ulama*. He considered such an extension to be absurd.

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[27] Ibid., 163.

[28] Gregory Rose, "*Velayat-e Faqih* and the Recovery of Islamic Identity in the Thought of Ayatollah Khomeini," in *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution,* ed. Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 169.

[29] Ibid., 170.

[30] Enayat, "Iran: Khumayni's concept of the 'Guardianship of the Jurisconsult," 161-62.

Sheikh Ansari's position provides a foundation from which to elucidate Khomeini's contribution.

Deviating from the traditional norms guiding the *ulama*'s role in society, as discussed by Sheikh Ansari, Khomeini asserted that in the absence of the Hidden Imam, the *ulama* were the proper leaders of the state. Since the *ulama* were, by virtue of their deep knowledge of religion, morally superior to the general public, they must exert authority. Though Khomeini did not claim infallibility, his stance argues that the *ulama* and the supreme leader in particular are less fallible than everyone else.[31] Contrary to their traditional role as advisor, the *mujtahids* should embrace their superior ability and command the faithful until the day of the Imam's return.

Besides arguing for the particular virtues of the *wilayet e-faqih*, Khomeini advocated activism to affect change. He framed his motivation in two major ways: the protection of Islam from the West, and the loss of religious values internal to the community. Khomeini viewed quietist *ulama* as complicit in these threats since they were not striving to stop them and achieve justice.[32] The strength of his argument lay in this very threat, with which few would argue. The *ulama* had long had a critical role in defending the public interest from Western intrusion and exploitation, particularly in Iran but elsewhere as well. Further, the decline of religious values in the decades following the Second World War was a recognized problem in the Shiite communities. In large part, the Shiite movements of the *Da'wah* in Iraq and Musa al-Sadr in Lebanon were attempts to reverse the decline of religion in their communities. Unlike his ideological opponents within the *ulama*, Khomeini offered a plan to seize opportunities for change rather than continue to acquiesce to an undesirable status quo.

4.   Other Voices – al-Sadr and Fadlallah

A younger generation of *ulama* diverged from the two aforementioned schools of thought, the traditional and the revolutionary. Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and Sayyid

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[31] Marvin Zonis and Daniel Brumberg, "Shi'ism as Interpreted by Khomeini: An Ideology of Revolutionary Violence," in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, ed. Martin Kramer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 58-9.

[32] Enayat, "Iran: Khumayni's concept of the 'Guardianship of the Jurisconsult," 170.

Fadlallah, while different with respect to each other, both advocated positions that blended or advanced traditional and revolutionary ideologies.

Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr remains one of the most respected Shiite scholars even almost twenty-five years after his death. A leading activist in Iraq's *Da'wah* party, he sought to reform his religion through rigorous inward examination followed by an explicit and cogent philosophy.[33] Its purpose was to reconcile the apparent incongruity between religious belief and modern technology and science, while avoiding the pitfall of the West's moral bankruptcy. His two most significant works, *Our Philosophy* and *Our Economics*, and presumably his unpublished but lost work *Our Society*, addressed this struggle and continue to be read and respected in the Muslim world. *Our Economics* is considered one of the seminal works on Islamic economics.

Refuting socialism was a significant focus in *Our Economics*, reflecting the growing Shiite membership in leftist parties.[34] Sadr demonstrated an in depth knowledge of western philosophy in his critique, an interesting intellectual divergence for a scholar steeped in Shiite religious law. The major contribution of *Our Economics* is a state-centric system based on wealth redistribution (including land reforms) and Islamic law.

Sadr became enamored with Khomeini and the concept of the *wilayet e-faqih* during the mid-1970s. His involvement with the *Da'wah* party and the uprisings precipitated by the Iranian revolution are discussed in Chapter II. On the surface his legacy is that of revolutionary leader and martyr, but his importance goes beyond these. He offered a philosophy distinct from his political or religious agenda that was unique and intellectually rigorous. Though the loss of *Our Society* makes it impossible to discover Sadr's fully developed social system, he nevertheless achieved his objective – to formulate a universal Islamic philosophy to counter the competing scions of Western thought, capitalism and communism.

Despite his opposition to socialism, Sadr recognized and was willing to use effective methods they pioneered. Sadr sought to cultivate a comprehensive Islamic

[33] John Walbridge, "Muhammad-Baqir al-Sadr: The Search for New Foundations," in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 132.

[34] Chibli Mallat, "Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr," in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival,* ed. Ali Rahnema (London: Zed Books, 1994), 263-65.

ideology based on the Leninist model, comprised of a revolutionary vanguard, ideologically committed activists, and a cellular structure.[35] From this intellectual point of departure, Sadr offered a four phase progression for the *Da'wah's* development: party founding and recruitment; political opposition; gaining control of the state and establishment of an Islamic political system; and protection of Islam and the *umma*.[36] The primary focus of effort, and presumably the longest temporally, was the political opposition phase. Sadr was content to advance the party to this phase, laying the groundwork for activism and opposing the regime as practicable. By patiently waiting until the proper opening appeared (i.e., sufficient political opportunities) the *Da'wah* would bide its time and strike when success was a realistic outcome.

Sadr's proposal of an operationalized version of the *wilayet e-faqih* was another significant contribution.[37] While Khomeini had outlined the parameters of the *wilayet e-faqih*, he was not forthcoming with a plan for implementation. In response to a query by Lebanese *ulama* who requested his views on Khomeini's teachings, Sadr wrote a short work that described the political system of an Islamic government.[38] This document was revolutionary in that it proposed a popularly elected parliament and executive while the *ulama* was reserved a supervisory role to ensure compliance with Islamic law. Sadr's plan pre-dated and foreshadowed many of the provisions of the Iranian Constitution.

Ayatollah Sayyid Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah is a complex and enigmatic figure even when considered in the context of the multifaceted and bewildering Lebanese political landscape. Though never officially associated with Hezbollah, Fadlallah's religious interpretations and political acumen have played a central role in the Party of God's emergence as a significant Shiite mass movement, as well as its evolution toward

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[35] Talib Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr," in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 232.

[36] Ibid., 235.

[37] Hanna Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq: al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah and al-Mujahidin," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest,* ed. Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 180-81.

[38] Mallat, "Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr," 266-67.

participation in a secular government.[39] He is best known for his willingness to accept a cross-communal secular Lebanese government and for his various charitable activities throughout Lebanon. He has shown a remarkable ability to retain his religious following while also attracting secular Muslim and even Christian supporters. His arguments are often framed in nationalist terms, focusing on the expulsion of the West from Arab lands. This has aided his emergence as a broad-based leader rather than as that of an isolated confessional group.

Fadlallah is a vehement anti-colonialist, deriding the United States as the primary instigator of Muslim oppression.[40] Much of this sentiment stems from virtually unconditional American support for Israel, American presence in Beirut in the early 1980s, the Gulf War, and the recent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. He has been extremely vocal concerning the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, consistently questioning the ability of the United States to act as an arbitrator due to its partisan preferences and policies. Fadlallah has made clear his position on three important issues with broad implications: cross-communal dialogue and participation in a secular Lebanese state,[41] anti-Westernism, particularly with respect to the United States, and intransigence toward recognition and peace with Israel.[42]

Fadlallah was a student of Ayatollahs Hakim and Kho'i, and inherited many of their views. The success of the Iranian revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini's ascent to prominence created a conflict for Fadlallah. Ayatollah Kho'i, Fadlallah's mentor whose charity organization he was responsible for in Lebanon, was outspoken in his criticism of the *wilayet e-faqih* arguing that the proper role of the *ulama* in observing and advising the government, not direct rule.[43] However, Fadlallah saw in the Iranian Revolution a unique opportunity to forward his agenda. Iran supplied material resources, but also powerful

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[39] Martin Kramer, "The Oracle of Hizbullah: Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah," in Spokesmen of the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East, ed. R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 85.

[40] Ibid., 108-09.

[41] Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2004), 61.

[42] Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah and Mahmoud Soueid, "Islamic Unity and Political Change. Interview with Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, No. 1 (Autumn, 1995): 75.

[43] Kramer, "The Oracle of Hizbullah," 161.

revolutionary symbolism. As Iran sought to expand its revolution internationally, it encountered difficulty in Lebanon overcoming language and cultural barriers. Fadlallah provided an indigenous spokesman there who could effectively convey the revolutionary message. In return Fadlallah was able to exploit the Iranian experience and funds to motivate his nascent movement.[44]

Through the 1980s Fadlallah recognized that the disagreement between Khomeini and Kho'i concerning the *wilayet e-faqih* was well beyond his level; both *marja'* were decades senior to him.[45] He sought to walk a fine line between their opposing viewpoints while maintaining the goodwill of both. Only after they died, Khomeini in 1989 and Kho'i in 1992, did Fadlallah publicly articulate his opinion of the *wilayet e-faqih*. His key criticism of the *wilayet e-faqih* and Khomeini was what he viewed as an excessive reliance on charismatic leadership, creating a situation in "…which [the] messenger overshadows the message."[46] He viewed the creation of an Islamic state to be a rational, calculated act, not to be merely tied to support for a particular demagogue.

Fadlallah has attempted to remain publicly aloof from politics, denying active involvement in Hezbollah despite his commonly accepted position as their "Spiritual Guide." While he favored the institution of the *wilayet e-faqih* and its implementation in Lebanon during the 1980s, he has since retracted that view and publicly concluded that an Islamic government is not viable in Lebanon's heterogeneous society.[47] The nature of this environment echoes in other rulings as well, singling Fadlallah out as one of the more liberal *marja'* with respect to the role of women in society and other social issues.

B.   THE IMPACT OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

The Islamic Revolution in Iran put other Muslim regimes on notice. Even a notionally strong regime with superpower support and a modern military could be overthrown. Two themes emerge as the animating force of the Islamic Republic's early

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[44] Ibid., 104.

[45] Kramer, "The Oracle of Hizbullah," 161-63.

[46] Talib Aziz, "Fadlallah and the Remaking of the Marja'iya," in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 206.

[47] Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, "Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah: The Palestinians, the Shi'a, and South Lebanon" *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, no. 2 (Winter 1987): 6.

foreign policy.[48] First, Muslims everywhere should be incited to rise up and install Islamic governments similar to Iran's. Only through an Islamic government, it was thought, could pious Muslims live a virtuous life without the conflict resultant from secular state interference. Second, the *umma* should be reunited and restored to a position of dominance in world power. The artificial states, their boundaries, and the feelings of nationalism that followed were a legacy of imperialism, serving to divide and weaken the *umma*. By casting off such false loyalties and returning to their past organization Muslims could correct the vast disparity of relative power with the West.

Ali Shari'ati was one of the first thinkers to discount quietism derived from *entezar*, arguing that not only was active resistance allowed, but it was necessary to create the proper conditions for the Mahdi's return.[49] Following this line of reasoning, every act that reformed society brought the return closer. As Iran was the only place to have realized this ideal, it then became necessary to spread the good word throughout the world, freeing the oppressed, establishing justice, and accelerating the reappearance of the Hidden Imam.

More pragmatically, universalizing and exporting the Iranian revolution helped to legitimize the newly ascendant and still fragile regime while distracting its opposition to problems beyond the frontiers.[50] In either case, the Iranian leadership framed the revolution in universalist terms as a movement of true believers to free the oppressed and disadvantaged of the world from the yoke of imperialism and inequality. This resonated with Shiite audiences in two significant ways. First, the dichotomy of oppressed and oppressor is central to Shiite history and belief, centering on the imagery of Imam Hussein's martyrdom at the Battle of Karbala in 680. Second, Shiite history has largely been one of repression and poverty. The imagery of religious oppression added to that of economic class oppression resonated widely, particularly as Shiites were the largest adherents of communist ideology in many states. By advancing an ideology that would

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[48] Ram, "Exporting Iran's Islamic Revolution," 7.

[49] Ibid., 8.

[50] Shahram Chubin, "The Islamic Republic's Foreign Policy in the Gulf," in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, ed. Martin Kramer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 165.

free the oppressed, one backed by a powerful Shiite state, poor Shiites saw a glimmer of hope that their lot in life would improve.

Khomeini did not accept the framework of the international state system.[51] He framed his movement as Islamic rather than Iranian with a universal appeal that transcended the artificial state borders separating the *umma*. Not only was spreading the revolution throughout the Muslim world desirable, it was a religious duty and obligation to cast down secular governments and restore the *umma*. He argued that,

> Both law and reason require that we not permit governments to retain this non-Islamic or anti-Islamic character…We have in reality, then, no choice but to destroy those systems of government that are corrupt in themselves and also entail the corruption of others, and to overthrow all treacherous, corrupt, oppressive, and criminal regimes…This is a duty that all Muslims must fulfill, in every one of the Muslim countries, in order to achieve the triumphant political revolution of Islam.[52]

Furthermore, the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Hashemi-Rafsanjani argued that,

> The Islamic revolution does not confine its true and noble nature to geographical borders and deems the conveying of the message of revolution, which is the selfsame message of Islam, as its own duty.[53]

In both statements the revolution is framed in universal, international terms as a movement to spread Islam and free the oppressed from various forms of "illegitimate" government.

The reasons behind the failure of the Islamic revolution to spread throughout the Muslim world are complex and beyond the scope of this inquiry. However, several trends did emerge in Iranian actions that can briefly help explain the mediocre record.[54] The primary example of this was the inability, in practice, to separate Iranian self-interest from the Islamic Revolution's international incarnation. As the Iran-Iraq War was joined

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[51] Ibid., 163.

[52] Ruhollah Khomeini and Hamid Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1980), 48.

[53] BBC, Survey of World Broadcasts, Part IV (A) The Middle East, November 2, 1984, ME/7790/A/1.

[54] Fred Halliday, "Iranian Foreign Policy since 1979: Internationalism and Nationalism in the Islamic Revolution," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, ed. Juan R. I. Cole & Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 106-7.

and expanded in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, Iranian rhetoric often took a nationalist rather than Islamic tone to rally the troops and general public. When it did take a religious tone, it tended to use Shiite symbology. The Iranian nationalist and Shiite contexts failed to resonate, and indeed understandably repelled, those who did not identify as one or both of these groups. Additionally, as the progenitors of the revolution, Iranians expected themselves to lead movements abroad. While Shiite movements were eager to receive aid and support, they were not interested in relinquishing their power to foreigners. After the first few years, the Islamic Republic was largely confined to aiding dissident groups without the realistic expectation of fostering populist revolution on the scale of 1979.

The Islamic Revolution successfully exported itself in two ways: *demonstration effect* and *political and material support. Demonstration effect* refers to a successful example, in this case Iran, which proved the feasibility of collective action. Other groups, even if widely divergent in ideology or goals, learn from the example of successful movements and tend to adopt similar tactics. I define *political and material support* as state sponsored training, funding, and diplomatic aid to social movement organizations. The Iraqi case study aptly illustrates the *demonstration effect*. The Shiite opposition was primarily motivated by the success of an Islamic populist uprising and sought to recreate it in Iraq. Little more than the Iranian example was needed to convince the *Da'wah* leadership that revolution was a possibility achievable through mass protest.

The Hezbollah case reinforces the importance of *political and material support* to the Lebanese movement. Hezbollah was able to expand rapidly and become a significant player in the Lebanese conflict through the recruitment of salaried militiamen. This was only made possible through Iranian patronage and made more effective with training by the Revolutionary Guard. Without this external infusion of resources, it is likely the Lebanese Shiites would have remained a disparate community working at cross purposes.

The Bahrain case also relies on the use of Iranian *political and material support*. The various opposition movements that emerged in the 1980s were never able to claim populist support, forcing activists to rely upon Iranian funding, training, and safe-havens. The Shiite movement in Bahrain during the 1990s was not significantly affected by the

Iranian Revolution, other than a possible nod to its *demonstration effect*. That movement however, remained committed to explicitly secular political goals even after it became dominated by religious frames and mobilization structures.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social movement theory is a fairly new discipline that is constantly evolving, especially when applied to the Middle East. A common approach in the past has been "relative deprivation" which asserts that collective action is born from poverty, lack of education, and haplessness. Another common bias of literature on the Middle East is that Arabs or Muslims are in some way unique. Thus theory drawn from experiences external to the region is inapplicable. This study rejects the two preceding approaches, instead arguing that social movements in the Middle East derive from stimuli explicable with a broader cross-cultural theory, namely political disenfranchisement and indiscriminate repression. Social movement theory is a compelling and parsimonious approach that explains the shift from acquiescence to collective action.[55]

I based my treatment of social movement theory upon several foundational works in the field. Sidney Tarrow's *Power in Movement*[56] was instrumental to my understanding of political opportunities and framing. Also fundamental to this thesis were McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald's work *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*[57] and McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's effort *Dynamics of Contention.*[58] These studies provide an effective social movement framework that illuminates the qualities of contentious politics. The collective works of these scholars provide the foundation upon which later studies, including those that apply social movement theory to Muslim experiences, are built. I rely on their generally accepted variables (political opportunities; mobilization structures; and framing) to organize this thesis and focus my inquiry.

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[55] Mohamed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).

[56] Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement, 2nd ed.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[57] Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, ed., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[58] Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Charles Kurzman significantly contributed to my understanding of political opportunities and mobilization structures. In "Organizational Opportunity and Social Movement Mobilization,"[59] Kurzman demonstrated how existing organizations, in this case religious institutions, can be co-opted by fringe membership to carry out the agenda of a social movement. Included is an analysis of factors that make an organization more or less susceptible to cooptation. In "Structural Opportunity and Perceived Opportunity in Social-Movement Theory,"[60] Kurzman made the useful distinction between actual structural opportunities and their perception among opposition activists. He concluded that in some cases structural opportunities can actually be created through the manipulation of perceived opportunities by movement entrepreneurs.

I also utilize several treatments of Islamic social movements, primarily those of Mohammad Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz[61] Wiktorowicz's compilation forwards the difficult but necessary task of bringing Middle East studies and social movement theory together. Particularly useful were the chapters by Wiktorowicz, Lawson, and Smith. The introduction by Wiktorowicz provides an excellent primer on social movement theory and its application to Islamic activism. Fred H. Lawson's "Repertoires of Contention in Contemporary Bahrain" offered invaluable insights into the Shiite movement in Bahrain by explaining it through the lens of social movement theory.

To establish the traditional role of the *ulama* as a baseline to track evolving roles, I used Linda S. Walbridge's compilation *The Most Learned of the Shi'a.*[62] This work is unique in its extensive and penetrating examination of the Shiite *ulama*, their history, intellectual and religious foundations, and elucidation of prominent schools of thought within the institution. These basic sources were complimented by data on Iran, Bahrain, and Lebanon, and assessments of the *ulama* historically and currently.

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[59] Charles Kurzman, "Organizational Opportunity and Social Movement Mobilization: A Comparative Analysis of Four Religious Movements," *Mobilization* 3, no. 1 (1998): 23-49.

[60] Charles Kurzman, "Structural Opportunity and Perceived Opportunity in Social-Movement Theory: The Iranian Revolution of 1979," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 1 (Feb., 1996): 153-170.

[61] Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[62] Linda S. Walbridge, ed., *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

D.   THESIS OVERVIEW

Chapter II focuses on political opportunity. Social movements are shaped by the environment in which they develop. Political opportunity is a term often overused and ill defined. I argue that the decisive factors for inciting contentious collective action are exclusion from meaningful political participation and indiscriminate repression by the state. Once defined, political opportunity will be examined with respect to the three case studies; Bahrain, Lebanon, and Iraq. The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate that the two factors discussed above are present in each case.

The ability to efficiently mobilize resources is what separates successful movements from failures. Effective resource mobilization refers to interpersonal networks and money as well as other tangible resources. In Chapter III, I assert that the *ulama* were particularly well suited for the task of mobilization due to their existing organizational structure and command of resources independent of the state. In particular their loose organization ensured against efforts by the state to destroy the organization's leadership.

Attracting public support is a critical activity for a movement. The strategic use of symbols in the three cases is the focus of Chapter IV. The most difficult aspect of framing is to operationalize symbols that are traditional enough to resonate with their target audience, but at the same time radical enough to motivate action.[63] As masters of the vast corpus of Shiite history and law the *ulama* were uniquely suited to lead revolutionary movements.

In Chapter V, I conclude that Islamic Republics following the Iranian model are unlikely to occur in the future. The *wilayet efaqih* was effective only when led by Khomeini's charismatic authority. By deviating from tradition, Khomeini undermined the traditional authority of the Shiite hierarchy, a limitation he overcame, but one that his successors were unable to accomplish. The Islamic Republic's twenty-five years of mediocrity has demonstrated the negative aspects of direct political rule by the *ulama*. Leading *ulama* outside of Iran, particularly Ayatollahs Sistani and Fadlallah, have effectively rejected Khomeini's doctrine and returned the *ulama* to their traditional role -

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[63] Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 107.

that of influential and highly respected members of their community who advise lay politicians in the exercise of temporal authority.

This thesis has been able only to examine the historical role of the *ulama* in Shiite social movements, not to scrutinize the dynamics of necessary and sufficient conditions for their involvement. Through an analysis of three divergent Shiite movements, I have attempted to generalize trends in the *ulama*'s activist role since their emergence from quietism in the 1970s. Building on these trends I posit that proliferation of direct political rule by the *ulama*, according to the model of Khomeini's *wilayet e-faqih*, is an unlikely development in the near future.

When exercising their traditional role as quietist guardians of the status quo, the Shiite *ulama* derive their legitimacy from Weber's concept of traditional authority.[64] The voluntary relationship between *marja'* and *muqallid* resembles an informal democratic institution.[65] A *marja'* must address the concerns and requirements of his *muqallid* or the emulator will find one who will. Conversely, the *muqallid* needs the guidance of the *marja'* to properly fulfill his religious obligations and to understand how religious law is applicable to the constantly changing world. As a result of this mutually supportive relationship, the *marja'* and other *ulama* may seek to interpret and change tradition in order to respond to constituent demands. Given sufficient popular support for these demands, elements of the *ulama* become movement entrepreneurs to carry out the requested changes. In these cases, the critical variable is not the leader himself, but rather the ability of his position to resonate with the public. When this position creates enough popularity for the leader, he is then able to affect change on the actual practice of Shiite doctrine.

The Shiite hierarchy possesses ample "organizational opportunity" for movement entrepreneurs to capitalize on. As an institution the Shiite *ulama* have difficulty policing their own membership for compliance with the leadership's position, since an *'alim*'s reputation is as much a function of popularity and size of following as it is acceptance by the hierarchy. The *marja'* must convince his followers that his actions are correct rather

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[64] Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 341.

[65] Walbridge, "The Counterreformation," 233.

than force them. Kurzman asserts that organizations incapable of strictly policing their membership are open to cooptation by internal movement entrepreneurs.[66] This "organizational opportunity" gives *ulama* who seek to respond to popular requests the latitude to do so.

I argue that when the *ulama* deviate too radically from the traditional jurisdiction of religious law, they undermine their own legitimacy and harm the institution in the long-term. The exercise of charismatic authority by an exceptional leader, Khomeini for instance, can mitigate the harmful effect during his reign, but faces difficulty in its institutionalization following the leader's death.

While the ramifications of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 for Shiite movements are still unclear, my study offers an answer to those who fearfully predict the rise of a Shiite dominated Islamic state in post-Ba'ath Iraq. I base these conclusions not on recent and unexamined events, for which we still have little data, but on historical analogies of similar Shiite social movements.

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[66] Kurzman, "Organizational Opportunity and Social Movement Mobilization," 25.

II.   POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

Political opportunity is a nebulous term that often accumulates tangential factors. Multiple factors fit somehow under this heading. While students of social movements generally agree on the importance of political opportunity to the evolution of a movement, defining and constraining the bounds of this variable is a source of endless contention. At the most basic, it is agreed that the political environment and institutions in which a social movement develops shapes that movement in specific ways related to its political context.[67] By its nature as an oppositional force, its interaction with the state creates an iterative process of change within both the opposition and the state. This dynamic relationship, combined with external factors, creates openings in which political action is possible. This holds true for both the opposition and the establishment. Various emergent opportunities either favor opposition-led reform or regime-led repression. These political opportunities are fickle and can pass quickly. Only when a movement is properly motivated, able to mobilize sufficient resources, and able to frame their movement in ways that resonate with their base of support can it take advantage of the fleeting moments of opportunity.

Charles Kurzman usefully distinguishes between structural and perceived opportunities.[68] As a point of departure, he uses Alexis de Tocqueville's assertion that when an oppressed people recognize the state weakening its repressive measures, they will rebel. Kurzman agrees with this assertion, but refines it by arguing that structural change (e.g. a significant incapacity in the state's coercive apparatus) is separate from the perception of that change. That is, the structural change is only significant if it is recognized and acted upon. When the structural and perceived opportunities correlate, the potential for a successful movement increases. Two mismatches are possible: failing to perceive existing structural opportunities, and perceiving structural opportunity where none exists. When mismatches occur, movement failure, at least tactically, usually

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[67] Doug McAdam, "Conceptual Origins, Problems, Future Directions," in Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer Zald N., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 23.

[68] Kurzman, "Structural Opportunity and Perceived Opportunity in Social-Movement Theory," 154-55.

results. The notable anomaly to this assertion is the Iranian Revolution, a case in which Kurzman argues the opposition effectively created perceived opportunity without preexisting structural opportunity. Movement entrepreneurs, in this study the *ulama*, are critical to recognizing and shaping potential opportunities.

Disagreement exists over the extent to which different influences are included in the political opportunity variable. Two major foci emerge from the debate: the degree of meaningful access to the political process and the state's capacity and proclivity to repress opposition or dissent. Mohammad Hafez uses these two metrics to evaluate the political opportunity in his study of contentious social movements in Algeria and Egypt.[69] He argues that the political environment places constraints upon and opportunities for an emergent movement. The degree to which opposition movements are allowed access to political decision-making is isolated as a key factor affecting whether a movement resorts to violence and revolution or peaceful activism and reform. Exacerbating this effect is state repression. When used discriminately it tends to have little effect. Indiscriminate repression not only radicalizes the movement, but also increases sympathy for it among the public and mobilizes new members that might have otherwise remained docile. These two factors create conditions that empower a movement to act decisively when a favorable opportunity emerges. Furthermore, the iterative nature of contention with the state actually creates political opportunities that can be taken advantage of by either participant.[70]

The three case studies examined in this paper fit well within this framework for political opportunity. Political opportunity in Bahrain, Lebanon, and Iraq differ in specificity, but share a common lack of opposition influence in the established political system as well as a large degree of state repression. Bahrain and Iraq are both autocratic states governed by a religious minority in which the majority is politically disenfranchised and brutally repressed when collectively expressing dissent. In Bahrain the impetus of the reform movement followed from the efforts of disenfranchised elites to restore the 1973 constitution. They broadened a petition campaign that started with elites to include the dissatisfied Shiite majority. The resulting repression by the state led to a

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[69] Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel*, 27.

[70] Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 86.

spiraling escalation of hostilities, a political opportunity that was exploited by the Shiite *ulama*. The situation in Iraq was similar. The *Da'wah* party initially formed to foster a resurgence of Shiite piety, but quickly evolved into a force that organized public religious observances and worked to protect followers from government repression. The two major uprisings, in 1979-80 and 1991, were both attempts to take advantage of an apparent political opening, in the former case the success of the Iranian revolution and in the latter the perceived weakness of the Iraqi regime following its military defeat in Kuwait by the United States.

Lebanon is a different case. Hezbollah emerged within the context of a civil war and occupation during which the state did not possess an effective political framework or capacity to use force. The Lebanese Shiite movement, and its spawn the Lebanese Resistance Detachments, or *Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyah* (AMAL), emerged in the run-up to the civil war in order to address many of the issues the state was unable to: specifically, the disproportionately weak representation of Muslims in the Lebanese government and Israeli collective punishment against Shiite villages in response to Palestinian activities. Already splintered off of AMAL following Musa al-Sadr's disappearance, the Hezbollah precursors arose to contest the Israeli invasion in 1982, coalescing in large part from local militias devoted to village defense. In this case, the lack of formal institutions to participate in and the repression of the IDF precipitated a self-help strategy of militant opposition.

A. BAHRAIN: POLITICAL EXCLUSION AND REPRESSION

The call for political participation has been the *raison d'être* of the Bahraini opposition for decades. Following the al-Khalifah conquest of Bahrain in the eighteenth century, and the monarchy's alliance with Great Britain in the nineteenth century, the original Shiite inhabitants have been disenfranchised politically. Hopes soared with the establishment of the constitution in 1973, but were soon shattered. Reestablishment of the constitution was the primary goal of the opposition movement, though Shiite ideology became an important motivator after the Iranian revolution.[71]

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[71] Uzi Rabi and Joseph Kostiner, "The Shi'is in Bahrain: Class and Religious Protest," in *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 174-5.

Since independence from Great Britain in 1971, the al-Khalifah family has maintained a nearly complete monopoly of power in Bahrain. The first emir, Isa bin Salman al-Khalifah, initially favored a constitutional arraignment consisting of a partially elected parliament, similar to the successful Kuwaiti model.[72] The constitution was enacted in 1973, with thirty elected and fourteen appointed members of the national assembly. The emir's flirtation with limited democracy proved to be short-lived. Upset over the national assembly's refusal to ratify a security bill that severely restricted civil liberties, in August 1975 the emir suspended the constitution and dissolved the parliament.[73] This act would become the central rally point for future opposition.

Political power in Bahrain is divided along sectarian lines. The Khalifah and their minority Sunni allies hold all significant ministries. Where Shiites are allowed participation, six of eighteen cabinet ministers are Shiite; it is in lesser ministries not related to security or foreign affairs.[74] During the mid 1970s for example, Shiites led five ministries: health; legal affairs; commerce and agriculture; public works, power, and water; and transportation and communications.[75] Thus, the regime pays lip service by allowing very limited Shiite participation while insuring against their accumulation of coercive force. This attempt is of course transparent to most Shiites and has little effect in placating their desire for a meaningful voice.

The establishment of the Consultative Council (*majlis al-shura*) in 1992 was another attempt by the emir to curry favor with proponents of democratic reform, Sunni and Shiite alike.[76] This body of forty notables, many of whom were previously members of the National Assembly, serves as advisors to the emir but have no legislative powers. Additionally their deliberations are not open to public scrutiny. Although Shiites hold twenty-one of the forty seats, representation is still disproportional since they comprise

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[72] Luayy Bahri, "The Socioeconomic Foundations of the Shiite Opposition in Bahrain," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (2000): 130.

[73] J. E. Peterson, *The Arab Gulf States: Steps Toward Political Participation* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 76-7.

[74] Ibid., 133.

[75] Rabi and Kostiner, "The Shi'is in Bahrain," 173.

[76] Bahri, "The Socioeconomic Foundations of the Shiite Opposition in Bahrain," 129-143.

approximately 70 percent of the population.[77] Unsurprisingly, the Consultative Council has not satisfied opposition demands for representative government. The council did create political opportunity, however. In his examination of reform in the late Soviet Union, Tarrow recognized that attempts at reform that increase access to the political system tend to create space that can be exploited by opposition entrepreneurs.[78] The emir's establishment of the Consultative Council was an attempt to co-opt his opposition, but instead legitimized their place in government, further demonstrating his denial of meaningful Shiite participation, and created a new injustice for the opposition to focus upon.

By the outbreak of hostilities in 1994, the Khalifah regime had proven itself unwilling to share political power if it threatened or eroded their overall control. The executive, in the form of the emir, completely dominated government. He enjoyed the ability to appoint and dismiss cabinet ministers at will; members owed their political livelihood and future to the emir. The Consultative Council, the only nod toward establishing a legislative body since 1975, was endowed only with advisory powers and had no ability to legislate. Shiites were either excluded from government or relegated to positions of peripheral importance and any democratic concessions were only cosmetic. Mohammad Hafez identifies exclusion from the political process as one of two causal factors for violent rebellion against the government.[79] Lack of institutionalized political influence forces the opposition to work outside the established framework of government to affect policy. It is not, however, enough to incite violence on its own. Armed dissent also requires another factor, which the al-Khalifa regime has provided in abundance, the indiscriminate repression of its opposition.

The outbreak of violence in Bahrain was primarily a series of mass protests, bombings, and arson. Without significant exceptions, the government response was indiscriminate arrests and the exile of purported leadership figures. Executions were more

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[77] "CIA World Fact Book - Bahrain," in Central Intelligence Agency [database online]. Washington, D.C. 14 SEP 04 [cited 2004]. Available from http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ba.html.

[78] Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 75-78.

[79] Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel*, 253.

discriminate, but still common. Arrests in the wake of a protest event, violent or not, often numbered in the hundreds or thousands, many times including women and children.

The outbreak of violence in 1994 is generally considered to have been precipitated by the circulation of an open letter to the emir that requested restoration of the National Assembly. Supporters contend that a petition containing over 22,000 signatures was included as evidence of popular support.[80] The Bahraini regime harassed and threatened those leading the petition effort, primarily Shiite *ulama*. This response increased the tension between the government and the protest movement, fanning an already flammable situation.

Tension erupted into chaos on November 25, 1994 during a charity relay marathon. The race course meandered through several Shiite villages, prompting *ulama* led protest against the immodestly dressed athletes. Shouting, pushing, and stone throwing ensued, the protest escalating in size and violence in the face of resistance.[81] Twenty men were arrested in connection to this event, including Sheikh Ali Salman al-Buladi, a young, popular, Shiite *'alim*, on December 5, 1994.[82] Ali Salman's arrest caused riots that lasted for two months. Authorities used riot control agents and rubber bullets liberally to disperse protesters. Two men were killed in Sanabis when police used live ammunition on the crowd.[83] Hundreds were arrested on the street, hundreds more as a result of police raids on houses. Many were held without being charged for months, even years. Ali Salman and a handful of other *ulama* were exiled in early 1995.

The protest spawned in response to the marathon incident and Ali Salman's arrest only hardened the regime's commitment to repressing dissent. During the early 1990s, the opposition was generally unified across sectarian lines, Sunni and Shiite alike advocating for the reinstatement of the constitution. By late 1994 however, the leadership

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[80] Joe Stork, "Bahrain's Crisis Worsens," *Middle East Report*, no. 204 (July - September 1997): 33-35.

[81] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Routine Abuse, Routine Denial: Civil Rights and the Political Crisis in Bahrain* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1997) 15.

Fred H. Lawson, "Repertoires of Contention in Contemporary Bahrain," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2004), 89.

[82] Abed Jaber, "Arrests reported in Bahrain protests" *United Press International*, LONDON, Dec.16, 1994.

[83] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Routine Abuse, Routine Denial*, 15.

had largely been taken over by Shiites, especially the *ulama.* They were the impetus behind the campaign for petition signatures and freely used their sermons to advocate political change.[84] Recognizing this shift and eager for someone to blame, the government began arresting respected *ulama* and disrupting their services. Most prominent of these was Sheikh Abd al-Amir al-Jamri, the leader of the Bahrain Islamic Freedom Movement and a former member of the National Assembly.[85]

The Bahraini regime seemingly softened its position in the summer of 1995 when it began secret negotiations with Sheikh al-Jamri and other detained *ulama,* including Abd al-Wahab Hussain, Sheikh Khalil Sultan, and Hasan Mushaima. These discussions, often personally conducted by the head of Bahrain's Intelligence Service, Ian Henderson, offered release from jail in return for quieting the protest movement.[86] Upon reaching an agreement, al-Jamri and the others were set free in September 1995. Their attempts to discourage violence were successful in the following months with the overall number of incidents sharply declining.[87] The government failed to abide by its commitments though, and the recently released clerics soon resumed anti-government sermons. Police began arresting parishioners as they left Friday services, arresting *ulama,* and resorted to heavy-handed tactics to break up crowds. Recognizing that relatively moderate activities were not effective in changing government policy, mass protest and stone-throwing were joined by a spate of bombings and arson that lasted for a year and a half.[88]

The combination of an exclusionary political process and indiscriminate state repression created a political opportunity structure in Bahrain that was favorable for violent protest. The other critical factors, mobilization structures and framing, will be addressed in the following chapters.

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[84] Rabi and Kostiner, "The Shi'is in Bahrain," 179-80.

[85] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Routine Abuse, Routine Denial*, 16.

[86] Stork, "Bahrain's Crisis Worsens," 33-35.

[87] Lawson, "Repertoires of Contention in Contemporary Bahrain," 100.

[88] Ibid., 100-103.

B.   LEBANON: WEAK STATE, EXCLUSION, AND INVASION

The Shiites of Lebanon have been politically impotent for much of their history. It was only in the 1950s and 1960s that a political consciousness began to emerge.[89] Though Shiites lagged behind other confessional groups in economic and political terms, they nevertheless were increasingly exposed to and affected by modernity and basic education. Many sought to escape from the control of the local political elites, the *zu'ama'*. These elites ran a rigid patron-client framework that dominated Shiite politics. As a result, many young Shiites were drawn to parties that advocated equality and improved social services. The communist party and sundry left-wing movements were the main benefactors of this trend.[90]

The post-colonial Lebanese state was based upon proportional representation of confessional groups in the parliament and other government offices. Based on the 1932 census, these accommodations were delineated in the National Pact of 1943. Over the ensuing decades Lebanon experienced a dramatic demographic shift in which the Shiite community grew from the third most populous to the first.[91] No corresponding shift in the political representation followed, creating a significant factor leading up to the 1975 Civil War.

Despite the increasing political consciousness and dissatisfaction, the Lebanese Shiites remained fractious. They tended to join multi-confessional parties, of which none gained hegemonic control of Shiite loyalty. A large percentage joined parties in search of a salary rather than out of civic-mindedness. Into this political maelstrom arrived a charismatic Najaf-trained *'alim* named Musa al-Sadr. He gained a following quickly and emerged as a leading voice in the Shiite community. One of his initial efforts and most important contributions was to overcome many of the cleavages that divided Lebanese Shiites, forging the geographically and even culturally diverse coreligionists into a proper nation. Sadr's importance was highlighted when he was made Chairman of the newly

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[89] Augustus R. Norton, "Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, ed. Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 157.

[90] Augustus R. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 37-38.

[91] Norton, "Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon," 159.

established Supreme Shi'i Council in 1969.[92] Though it rapidly lost influence due to the ascendance of the militias, this institution reflected the increasingly prominent role of Shiites in Lebanese national politics.

Musa al-Sadr purposefully launched a mass movement in 1974 which he called *Harakat al-Muhrumin* (the Movement of the Deprived). Its stated purpose was to strive against the grievances and oppression of the Shiites in order to affect social justice. The movement became marginalized with the outbreak of Civil War in 1975, but launched a militant wing, AMAL, that would become the most prominent Shiite organization in Lebanon.[93]

Perhaps Sadr's greatest contribution came following his disappearance, and probable death, in August 1978 while on a trip to Libya. Already popular, his esteem and reputation grew exponentially. Sadr's followers even framed his disappearance as "occultation," creating parallels to the vanished Shiite Twelfth Imam: symbolism that greatly resonated with their Shiite constituency. AMAL was subsequently led by Nabih Berri, a lawyer who successfully worked to secularize the organization.[94] This change in course led religiously minded activists to leave AMAL, forming the initial core in Southern Lebanon that would later become Hezbollah.

The chaos of the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted from 1975-90, created unique conditions for nascent social movements. Most obvious was the lack of a political system to participate in. Though the government officially never dissolved, it was at varied times either completely ineffectual or a tool of the Christian militias; in either case no opportunity existed for Shiites to participate in the decisions of state. The other major contribution of Lebanon's political environment was the requirement to be armed. An organization's primary role became protection of its constituents, especially by the early-1980s when the various groups coalesced inward forming a *de facto* canton system. The prevalence of violence shaped an emergent group's possible course, the classic security dilemma prevailed.

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[92] Ibid., 165-66.

[93] Judith P. Harik, *Hezbollah : The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 22.

[94] Ibid., 22.

The Shiite community of Southern Lebanon was not repressed by their domestic state, but were instead the recipients of collective reprisals by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and their proxy, the South Lebanon Army (SLA). Palestinian refugees lay at the core of the issue. Southern Lebanon had longstanding economic and cultural ties with Palestine and felt their plight in the aftermath of the 1948 Israeli War of Independence. The IDF severed traditional trade routes, but for the most part the shared border was quiet until the late-1960s. The Cairo agreements of 1969 asserted the right of Palestinians to launch guerilla attacks against Israel from Lebanon.[95] Additionally, the ouster of the PLO from Jordan in "Black September" of 1970 led to an influx of Palestinian insurgents in Southern Lebanon.

These immigrants to the South had the sympathy of their hosts, but most thought that the armed groups would become dangerous. They were right. The Palestinians rapidly became the most significant armed group in the South. The Lebanese Army, unpopular and viewed to be dominated by Christians, was unwilling or unable to keep the Palestinians under control. Besides preparing raids against Israel, the Palestinians also became involved in local politics.[96] A variety of Lebanese leftist groups were struggling to counter the *zu'ama* stranglehold on political power. Both sides sought to co-opt the Palestinians and gain influence from their preponderance of arms. The leftist groups were generally more successful at achieving this alliance, but in any case the domestic political struggle aided by foreign fighters reduced support for the Palestinians in the Lebanese populace and reinforced their image as troublemakers.

The increase of Palestinian militants in Southern Lebanon prompted Israeli raids. Before 1970 these attacks were primarily artillery barrage and air attacks, but after May 1970 ground attacks occurred as well. The targets were usually Palestinian camps and military bases, but Lebanese villages were often damaged. A conscious strategy emerged in the IDF to terrorize the civilian population in order to create and widen cleavages between the Lebanese and Palestinians.[97] The thought was that if association with

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[95] Ahmad Beydoun, "The South Lebanon Border Zone: A Local Perspective," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, No. 3 (Spring 1992): 36.

[96] Ibid., 38.

[97] Norton, "Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon," 168.

Palestinians were made to be sufficiently painful, the Lebanese would cease their support. To an extent this worked. In response to the murder of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games, Israel launched an incursion in September 1972 that left over 80 Lebanese civilians dead.[98] Artillery and air strikes continued to pound Lebanese villages. Combined with the destabilizing effect of Palestinian involvement in local politics, Lebanese civilians in the South withdrew their support from the Palestinian insurgents.

Operation Litani in March 1978 was an extreme example of the Israeli strategy. The nominal objective was the establishment of a 10-km wide security zone that was intended to prevent incursions of Palestinian guerillas. Instead the IDF invaded all the way to the Litani River, occupying more than 10 percent of Lebanon's territory. Estimates assert that about 1,000 Shiite civilians were killed, many more were wounded.[99] Additionally, vast numbers of houses were destroyed, leaving thousands homeless. Israel withdrew in June, but left the 10-km "security belt" in the hands of their proxy, the SLA, under the command of Major Saad Haddad.

The insecurity of the late-1970s had a profound effect on the formation of the Shiite movement. Villages in the South began forming their own security forces, often with the purpose of keeping Palestinians out in an effort to avoid Israeli collective punishment. These village militias came to recognize the value of associating themselves with a larger organization to better assure their security. AMAL, and later Hezbollah, would benefit from this trend.[100]

The indiscriminate repression of civilians by Israel in Southern Lebanon, most of whom were Shiite, did accomplish the task of reducing popular support for the Palestinians. However, the unintended consequence was the formation of self-help militias devoted at first to expulsion of Palestinians from local villages, but then expanded their mandate to resist the Israeli occupation. These militias came to be absorbed by or at least identify with the leading Shiite movements, AMAL or Hezbollah. In effect, the Israeli repression and contention with the Palestinians created a political opportunity, an opening and motive for Shiite mobilization.

[98] Beydoun, "South Lebanon Border Zone," 39.

[99] Ibid., 168.

[100] Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 50.

C.   IRAQ: SHIITE RESURGENCE UNDER PERSECUTION

Iraqi Shiites have always been politically marginalized. Though they exercised a degree of autonomy under Ottoman rule, mainly a function of the empire's impotence rather than benevolence, they were effectively excluded from political participation under British rule and later under that of the Hashemite monarchy. A critical factor to this political weakness was the fractious nature of Iraqi Shiites.[101] Local interests and loyalties, to clan, town, tribe, etc., tended to override identity as a Shiite. *Fatwas* issued by Najafi *ulama* exhorting their followers to resist the British invasion between 1914 and 1917 were ineffectual and failed to elicit mass support.[102] In short, sectarian allegiance was not considered to be one's primary loyalty. Furthermore, the rural population tended to follow local *sayyids*, rather than the *ulama* in Najaf or other shrine cities. The ensuing procession of Iraqi regimes capitalized upon and exploited these cleavages in order to keep the Shiite majority divided and politically ineffectual.

The imposition of a state system following the First World War cut the close link between Najaf and Iran. Qom gradually replaced Najaf as the most prestigious center of Shiite learning, though Arab Shiites still tended to go to Najaf and the other Iraqi shrine cities to study rather than going to Iran.[103] This helped widen cleavages between Arab and Persian Shiites, but also increased the competition between Arab scholars and local *sayyids,* further splitting the Shiite community.

The discrimination against Shiite political involvement has been institutionalized since the British occupied Iraq during the First World War. The Shiite religious establishment vehemently opposed British rule. As discussed above, they issues *fatwas* designed to mobilize armed opposition. To counter this threat the British exiled all non-Arab *ulama* from Iraq, greatly weakening the religious establishment and for all significant purposes rendering them politically impotent.[104] The British were only the first in a long line of minority rulers who sought political acquiescence from the Shiites.

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[101] Faleh A. Jabbar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq* (London: Saqi, 2003), 63-64

[102] Ibid., 65.

[103]   Yitzhak Nakkash, "The nature of Shi`ism in Iraq," in *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, religion and Social Movements in Iraq*, ed. Faleh A. Jabbar (London: Saqi, 2002), 28-9.

[104] Faleh A. Jabbar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, 65.

The Hashemite monarchy continued the British policy, creating a system of Sunni-based patronage that Shiites were unable to penetrate. The revolutionary regimes were no better.[105] Though Qassim's regime was less brutal as a rule, neither he, nor the 'Arif or Ba'ath regimes allowed Shiite inclusion and in many cases institutionalized repression.

The only significant Iraqi Shiite mass movement to emerge before the Islamic Revolution was that of the *Da'wah* party. This movement was founded in the late 1950s or early 1960s among the Shiite *ulama* in the Iraqi shrine cities, particularly Najaf.[106] Concern had been growing over the years over the decline of piety and religious observance among Iraqi Shiites. The growing influence of Marxism, youth attendance at secular, state-run schools, and government dissuasion created an environment where Shiite practices, and religion in general, were viewed as quaint, but outdated rituals. The *Da'wah* was an attempt on the part of junior *ulama* and pious Najafi bourgeoisie to reverse this trend.[107]

The progenitors of the *Da'wah* sought to create a comprehensive ideology with which to compete with Marxism and Leninism. Interestingly, they consciously imitated many of the organizational structures and mobilization methods used by their adversaries, correctly noting their utility and the inability of traditional patronage networks to compete. The founders, increasingly led by the young *'alim* Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, outlined three primary goals: to create a modern party framework to organize, publicize, and execute their mission; to consciously plan the future of their movement with a staged or phased approach; and to achieve the ultimate goal of an Islamic state.[108]

The *Da'wah* acted modestly before the Iranian revolution. During this period they focused on education and the organization of religious observances.[109] It was mainly the

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[105] Ali Babakhan, "The Deportation of Shi`is during the Iran-Iraq War: Causes and Consequences," in *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, religion and Social Movements in Iraq*, ed. Faleh A. Jabbar (London: Saqi, 2002), 188.

[106] Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq, 188.

[107] Abdul-Halim al-Ruhaimi, "The Da`wa Islamic Party: origins, actors and ideology," in *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, religion and Social Movements in Iraq*, ed. Faleh A. Jabbar (London: Saqi, 2002), 152.

[108] Faleh A. Jabbar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, 78-79.

[109] Ruhaimi, "The Da`wa Islamic Party," 154.

latter activity that brought them into contention with the state. The 'Arif regime sought to revitalize Sunni public life, while the Ba'ath discouraged religious activity generally. In both cases the regime was not willing to accept Shiite mass religious observances and resorted to repressive measures to prevent them.

Though they intended to educate and revitalize Shiite piety, the practical function of the *Da'wah* before the Iranian revolution was to counter state-sponsored repression of religious observances and protect those who participated. The 'Arif regime (1963-66) and especially the Ba'ath (post 1968) were particularly oppressive and elicited significant, if generally ineffectual, opposition by the party. [110] In particular the 1974 Husaini processions and the 1977 processions between Najaf and Karbala were attacked by government forces. In both cases the *Da'wah* led the resulting riots and other opposition activities. Recognizing that some accommodation would be needed, Saddam Hussein publicly supported the Ba'ath Party's commitment to freedom of religion, appeared and participated in various Shiite rituals, and was able to co-opt significant numbers of *ulama* through state contributions to religious infrastructure and charities. The flip side was that he would not tolerate political movements hiding behind the façade of religion, an open ended license to apply force as he saw fit. Prominent *Da'wah* members were arrested throughout the 1970s.

The *Da'wah* was in search of leadership and eventually found it in the person of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. Though relatively junior, Sadr was attractive for a variety of reasons. [111] He was a founding member of the *Da'wah* party as well as being a respected intellectual and scholar. Also of considerable importance was that he was one of the few Arab *ulama* involved in the movement. Perhaps most importantly, more senior *ulama* preferred to remain aloof from politics and refused to join.

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 was a watershed event for the *Da'wah*. Excited by the successful movement in Iran, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr thought the moment for revolution had also come to Iraq. He embraced Khomeini and the concept of the *wilayet e-faqih*. His actions placed him firmly in Khomeini's camp and made him a target of state

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[110] Batatu, "Shi'i organizations in Iraq," 190-94.

[111] Faleh A. Jabbar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, 227.

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repression. The first such activity was the declaration of a three day holiday in Najaf's religious schools to commemorate the Islamic Revolution.[112] During their time off, the students organized a peaceful protest march in which they carried pro-Khomeini banners. The march was targeted for state repression and many students were injured or arrested. Though neither the *Da'wah* nor Sadr appear to have been directly involved, Sadr implicated himself by leading negotiations with the government for the release of arrested students.

Increased tension with the government and internal *Da'wah* politics quickly became a problem for Sadr. Party leadership became reluctant at times to incite protests so Sadr began using his *wukala',* his personal organization used to collect tithes and carry out charity work, to organize and lead protests.[113] A competition then emerged between the *Da'wah* and *wukala'* activists to produce the largest and most effective marches, eventually motivating each side to take ever increasingly dangerous risks. Sadr became concerned that the competition would lead to exposure to government secret services; he was right. Ba'ath security forces observed the activists and effectively identified them as well as the movement's organization.

In June 1979 Sadr was arrested, but his organization was allowed to remain in place and under clandestine observation. A series of mass protests and riots ensued, as well as widespread international pressure against the Ba'ath regime's actions. Sadr was soon released but kept under house arrest. Four to five thousand members of Sadr's *wukala'* as well as many other activists were jailed and over two hundred executed.[114] With the organization destroyed the surviving activists resorted to a bombing campaign, but its effects were not coordinated and were ineffective. In March 1980, membership in the *Da'wah* party was declared to be punishable by death. Sadr was arrested and later killed on the 8th or 9th of April. Additionally, over 15,000 Iraqis of Iranian decent were expelled from the country, despite the fact that they had lived in Iraq for generations.[115]

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[112] Ibid., 227.

[113] Ibid., 230-1.

[114] Ibid., 232-4.

[115] Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq," 195.

The next major Shiite uprising occurred in the immediate aftermath of the 1990-91 Gulf War when retreating Iraqi units revolted while passing through the southern cities of Abu al-Khasib and al-Zubair three days after the surrender to the United States.[116] Unlike the 1979-80 protest movement, however, the riots of March 1991 were both unorganized and unsustainable. Both domestic and expatriate groups had been advocating just such a populist uprising through the Iran-Iraq War and beyond, but most had long since given up hope. In the event, no organization was prepared to capitalize on the quick gains achieved by what amounted to leaderless mobs.[117] The Ba'ath regime unleashed the Republican Guard against the rebellious regions, a conscious decision to implement indiscriminate slaughter. Estimates place the death toll as high as 300,000.[118]

Despite the dramatic and tragic events, the 1991 uprising cannot be classified as a social movement. It was instead an extended protest, brought about in response to a perceived political opportunity, the apparent collapse of the Ba'ath regime. There was no organization or structure with which to mobilize resources and no leadership to frame the uprising in terms that would resonate. Unlike examples of mobilization, in which informal networks advance shared goals, the Shiite uprising was typified by spontaneous activism following the example of mutinous Iraqi Army units. It was not built upon social networks and lacked a unifying goal other than regime change. The contemporaneous Kurdish uprising did not suffer from these handicaps. Though beyond the scope of this inquiry, that movement was more unified and arose through the effort of organized political groups with distinct political objectives.

D.   CONCLUSION

Political opportunity is a necessary component of a viable social movement. All three cases exhibited an apparent opportunity for action, empowered by exclusive political systems and indiscriminate repression of government opposition. As discussed

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[116] Faleh A. Jabbar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, 269.

[117] Faleh A. Jabbar, "Why the Uprisings Failed," *Middle East Report*, No. 176 (May – June 1992): 8.

[118] Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 289.

in Chapter I, the Iranian revolution provided a catalyst, providing proof that activism could succeed as well as providing material support.

Hezbollah in particular benefited from Iranian largess, but also gained ideologically and tactically from the association. The Lebanese movement mobilized in response to rampant insecurity and the state's inability to provide protection. Within this security vacuum the *ulama* emerged as a group that could provide security and social services for their communities.

Bahrain benefited mostly from the *demonstration effect*, that even a strong state could be compelled through popular action. The movement in Bahrain arose in response to the repeal of political rights, as defined in the 1973 constitution and the indiscriminate repression of those seeking to achieve political reform. The Shiite *ulama* rose to lead the movement due to their informal organization, considerable resources, and effective framing.

The Iranian revolution seemed to be a decisive moment for the *Da'wah* by providing an impetus for revolution, but Baqir al-Sadr failed to recognize that the specific and complex factors at work in Iran were not reproduced in Iraq. Broad-based populist support was not present in Iraq, even among the Shiites. The powerful alliance of the *ulama,* bourgeoisie, and elites that was present in Iran did not exist in Iraq. The *ulama,* though still influential, had been severely limited financially and in terms of public activism by the Ba'ath regime. Most importantly, the perception of regime instability was false. Unlike Iran, the Iraqi government took brutal and decisive action to put down the uprising.

In the case of Hezbollah and in Bahrain, the movements were successful. Hezbollah rapidly became an important player on the Lebanese stage, eventually becoming the only Muslim power to force an Israeli withdrawal without concessions. In Bahrain, the desired political reforms were basically granted by the Khalifah regime. In both these cases political opportunity was seized upon by a robust mobilization structure that adequately framed their movement. These factors will be discussed in the next two chapters.

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III.   MOBILIZATION STRUCTURES

Organization is necessary to sustain a social movement, transforming it from an *ad hoc* riot or protest into a viable political tool. Mobilization structure refers to both the organization needed to recruit and sustain members, and to the mechanisms for raising funding and other resources. This chapter identifies these structures in each case.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Shiite social movements that emerged in Bahrain, Lebanon, and Iraq were forced to operate in an environment devoid of meaningful political participation and were subject to constant repression. This environment provides three factors that encourage the development of loosely structured organizations with exclusive membership policies.[119] The threat of government infiltration requires movements to develop mechanisms so that only trustworthy people are recruited. This threat encourages exclusive recruitment, usually from members' informal circles of friends, family, or other close associates. The threat of decisive defeat is another critical influence; the movement cannot allow itself to be wiped out by a single government raid. This threat forces movements in repressive environments to decentralize, often according to the insurgent's classic cellular structure. The threat of defection is the final critical influence. While operating in a repressive environment, the defection of a key member could precipitate the movement's destruction. This threat further encourages a decentralized, cellular structure so that no one member knows enough to destroy the entire organization, but it also encourages the indoctrination of members to inculcate strong group loyalties.

Recognizing that creating a movement organization *ex nihilo* is extremely difficult, Charles Kurzman asserts that social movements often co-opt existing organizations.[120] Furthermore, he delineates four factors that make an organization more or less susceptible to such cooptation. First, the organizations have well established hierarchies that provide training, indoctrination, and a sense of identity to their members. Such hierarchies have formal and informal social networks and provide places for

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[119] Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel*, 110-11.

[120] Charles Kurzman, "Organizational Opportunity and Social Movement Mobilization: A Comparative Analysis of Four Religious Movements," *Mobilization* 3, no. 1 (1998): 23-49.

members to meet. Most importantly, members feel a sense of inclusion and loyalty to the institution. Second, these organizations have a wealth of ideological or theological resources with which to frame the movement. Third, conducive organizations are autonomous from the state, independent both in the appointment of officials and the collection of revenue. Fourth, these organizations rely on their constituents for resources rather than external benefactors. When combined, these factors make an organization a suitable vehicle for social mobilization. The critical remaining dynamic is "organizational opportunity." According to Kurzman, this opportunity occurs when either the organization's leadership is in favor of social activism, or is unable to punish those within the organization who are willing to act and bring the hierarchy's resources to bear in that effort.[121] Without sufficient organizational opportunity, an institution will remain resistant to being co-opted by a social movement.

In Iraq and especially Bahrain, there was sufficient organizational opportunity within the Shiite hierarchy to permit cooptation of the whole by internal activist fringe elements. Significant portions, if not the totality, of the Shiite hierarchy became involved and eventually superseded the original movement leadership. The Shiite establishment was particularly suited to cooptation due to a robust infrastructure for private gatherings, informal recruitment mechanisms, and a source of revenue independent from the state. Additionally, Shi'ism remains a source of framing that particularly resonates with its constituents; this factor will be discussed in Chapter IV. Lebanon had a slightly different experience, though Hezbollah did benefit greatly from the established charity system led by Sayyid Fadlallah. The primary difference was that in the early years Hezbollah received extensive financial and military aid from Iran, a factor that helped overcome the difficulty of initial resource mobilization. Hezbollah also benefited from the lack of an authoritarian regime capable of effective repression, a situation that allowed more public mobilization than the other case studies. When combined with favorable political opportunity, the effective mobilization structures adopted in the three cases completed the circuit that enables sustainable social mobilization.

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[121] Ibid., 25.

A.   BAHRAIN: ULAMA COOPTATION OF A SECULAR MOVEMENT

The Shiites of Bahrain are not homogenous in ethnicity or social class.[122] Known as al-Baharna, the oldest residents of Bahrain are of Persian decent. More recently, Arab Shiites from the al-Ahsa Province of Saudi Arabia have immigrated. This ethnic cleavage has traditionally been divisive and has been exploited by the minority Sunni regime in order to maintain its power. Class is also a profound fault line and has had an important effect in coalition building among political activists. Class divisions have played an important role in the history of Bahraini political contention.[123] Virtually all of Bahrain's poorest are Shiite, but there also exists a sizable middle class minority, well represented in the private sector and as lower-level bureaucrats. The most notable achievement of the Shiite movement in Bahrain was its ability to overcome these contentious divisions.

Bahrain experienced an upsurge in Shiite-perpetrated acts of terror during the 1980s in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution. Such operations were generally grand in scale and carried out by small, well trained and funded underground cells.[124] Support from Iran, which sought to spread the Islamic Revolution throughout the Gulf Region, was a poorly concealed secret. These efforts, however, were the result of Iranian initiative and fostered Khomeini's political goals rather than attempting to redress Bahraini grievances.[125] This movement sputtered out, its Iran-centric focus failing to attract widespread support.

The opposition movement central to this study began in the aftermath of the Gulf War (1990-91) as a secular, cross-sectarian attempt to restore the National Assembly and remove the official state of emergency, in place since 1975.[126] Led primarily by intellectuals and disenfranchised elites, its initial tactic was a petition campaign. Throughout the early-1990s a series of petitions were circulated among Bahrainis before being submitted to the emir. Some were signed only by elites, others by a large number of

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[122] Uzi Rabi and Joseph Kostiner, "The Shi'is in Bahrain: Class and Religious Protest," 174.

[123] Fred H. Lawson, *Bahrain: The Modernization of Autocracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 5.

[124] Anthony H. Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE: Challenges of Security* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 41-43.

[125] Joseph Kostiner, "Shi'i Unrest in the Gulf," 178.

[126] Lawson, "Repertoires of Contention in Contemporary Bahrain," 96-7.

common people. The government response was to accept the petition politely and then order repressive measures against participants.

The Shiite *ulama* gradually gained influence in the movement, eventually exercising near total control. The primary mechanism by which this was accomplished relied on the series of *matams* throughout the country.[127] Numbering about four hundred, these institutions are meeting places for Shiite to mourn their dead, but they also have extensive additional use as social, political, and educational meeting places.[128] The most influential tool of the *matam* is its trust fund. Each *matam* collects its own donations, and then distributes goods and services to needy members. Such funds are independent of government control and emphasize the state's lack of effective public service institutions. This helped delineate the dichotomy between state apathy and lack of welfare apparatus on one hand, and the positive, tangible aid of the Shiite community on the other. This self-help welfare system acted to build a cohesive Shiite society, alienated and in opposition to the state, that eroded the traditional ethnic and class rivalries.

A profound consequence of the *matams'* success is the power it gave to the *ulama*, many of them young and full of Iranian revolutionary ideology.[129] These clerics were responsible for managing the trust funds and had the discretion to direct the flow of money. As the primary benefactor of the poor and disenfranchised, the *ulama* had a receptive audience for their political and social agenda. A key factor for their success was that they continued to advocate the original political goals of representative government. While the rhetoric took on a Shiite flavor, they avoided alienating moderates and Sunnis who would view an Iranian style revolution as unfavorable.

Thus, the opposition movement began among elites and *ulama*, but was successfully disseminated to the people by primarily religious institutions. There were several prominent leaders in the movement, Sheikh al-Jamri in particular, but the hierarchy was fairly horizontal. Religious credentials and persuasiveness were more instrumental than titles and rank. The leadership certainly exercised control, but not in a

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[127] Luayy Bahri, "The Socioeconomic Foundations of the Shiite Opposition in Bahrain," 135.

[128] *Matams* are also known as *Husayniyya* elsewhere in the Shiite world. See Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, 240.

[129] Rabi and Kostiner, "The Shi'is in Bahrain: Class and Religious Protest," 180.

strictly military way. The *ulama* were very astute at starting their own demonstrations or gaining control of those that arose spontaneously.

B. LEBANON: SHIITE AND PLO FRICTION; IDF REPRISALS

Following the defeat of Arab forces in the Six Days War of 1967, the PLO shifted from a strategy centered for the most part on conventional tactics to a guerilla campaign against Israel.[130] As such, states bordering Israel became the primary front in their struggle, with Jordan and Lebanon as the main Palestinian concentrations. Following the defeat and expulsion of the PLO from Jordan in "Black September" 1970, Lebanon became the only feasible place from which to launch raids against Israel. An influx of Palestinians from Jordan swelled the Lebanese refugee camps in the months following that event. With this population shift, claimed to be 100,000 people, also came weapons and munitions.[131] These were used to train and equip operatives that engaged in cross-border strikes against Israel.

While many Southern Lebanese Shiites sympathized with the plight of the Palestinians, in practice the influx of refugees was destabilizing and caused a degree of resentment. Israel consciously began a campaign to exploit this potential cleavage through the use of collective punishment against the Shiites in response to PLO guerilla attacks.[132] The IDF reasoned that if they made aiding the PLO sufficiently painful, the Shiites would choose personal interest over ideology and withdraw support. Generally speaking, the Israeli attempt was successful. As discussed in Chapter II, the Israelis launched a series of attacks targeting both PLO forces and infrastructure, but also affecting the local Lebanese Shiites. The brief invasion in September 1972 following the massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games and 1978's Operation Litani are prime examples. Additionally, artillery barrages and air strikes were a common occurrence.[133] To protect themselves against IDF reprisals, villages began organizing militias whose mission was to keep Palestinians out. Over time these militias came to

[130] Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, revised edition (New York: Holmes and Meier, 2002), 81.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 49, 51.

[133] Ahmad Beydoun, "The South Lebanon Border Zone: A Local Perspective," 36.

identify with, and often affiliated themselves with AMAL to better resist external threats, both from Palestinians and the IDF.[134]

The Israeli 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Operation Peace for Galilee, was a critical event for Shiite mobilization. Though Hala Jabar asserts that the initial reaction from Shiites was fairly positive towards the invasion, they saw it as a solution to the Palestinian issue, feelings eventually soured.[135] AMAL took a moderate stance with respect to the invasion. Jabar argues that,

> Ironically, Israel, Berri, and the southern Shiites all wanted the same thing
> – an end to the Palestinian presence and guerrilla activity in South
> Lebanon, as well as security across both borders.[136]

Within a few months, however, the IDF began to lose what little support they had. The Israelis began organizing Lebanese militias under their own command. Shiites were pressured into joining, though leadership positions tended to be reserved for Christians. A variety of methods were used to compel recruitment. One method was to offer employment in Israel to one family member of a militiaman. Such workers could earn significantly more money in Israel than they could in Lebanon, so such initiatives were persuasive. A more negative tactic amounted to hostage taking; the IDF would compel volunteerism by holding family members in prison. Concurrent with these militia efforts, viewed to be preparations for a long-term stay, rumors proliferated that Israel intended to annex Lebanese territory up to the Litani River. The combination of these factors created a perception of Israeli permanence and changed the Israeli's role from tacit acceptance as a liberator from the Palestinians to a foreign invader.[137]

The Shiite resistance during the latter half of 1982 until October 1983 achieved minor success.[138] The movement was largely unorganized and spontaneous in nature. The various village militias operated with little coordination, but nevertheless were able

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[134] Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 50.

[135] Hala Jabar, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 14.

[136] Ibid., 14.

[137] Ibid., 15-6.

[138] Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 112-14.

to inflict an average of one Israeli casualty per day. Through this period the *ulama* remained fairly uninvolved. Those of lesser stature participated at the local level, but few notables were directly involved and there was little coordination by the Shiite hierarchy. This changed following the IDF repression of an *ashura* procession in Nabatiyeh on October 16, 1983.[139] In an attempt to break up the procession of approximately fifty-thousand people, the Israelis drove convoys through the crowds and eventually opened fire, killing several Shiites.

In response, Sheikh Muhammad Mehdi Shams al-Din issued a *fatwa* encouraging civil resistance against the Israeli occupation.[140] In typical fashion the IDF responded to the spike in violence with increased repression, most notably the Israelis isolated the south from Beirut, severing a vital economic linkage.[141] Without the Beirut markets, southern Shiite farmers were unable to sell their produce. This economic hardship further radicalized the southern Shiites. The *ulama* began assuming increasingly influential roles in the resistance, attempting to unify the disparate groups into an effective force that was seeking common objectives. Most of these clerics, as a rule very young, were trained in Najaf and were sympathetic to Khomeini. As the fight ensued, the southern Shiites became more radical than their AMAL leadership and resulted in a schism. This seems to be a function of the intersection of increasing adherence to Khomeini's vision and the brutal nature of the insurgency – the AMAL leadership was more moderate with respect to Israel because they were not in active conflict with them.

During this period the nascent Hezbollah remained underground, not publicly proclaiming itself until 1985. The movement received a great impetus however, in the immediate aftermath of the 1982 invasion. Several leading Lebanese *ulama* were in Iran when the invasion occurred and were immediately offered aid by the Islamic Republic. Led by the aforementioned young clerics, the movement began training operations in out of the way Shiite strongholds such as the Bekaa Valley, as well as sending people for training to Iran or Iran's Damascus embassy.[142] When operational, these operatives

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[139] Jabar, *Hezbollah*, 18.

[140] Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 113.

[141] Jabar, *Hezbollah*, 19-20.

[142] Ibid., 49.

avoided revelation of their origins, instead claiming loyalty to various organizations under AMAL's sphere of influence. The result was raids being conducted by mysterious Shiite radicals whose organization and objectives were for the most part unknown.

What resulted was, in effect, a movement with two major groups – those derived from the local militias, and those from the Iranian-trained core. The *ulama* was the critical factor in bringing these groups together in the years following the 1982 invasion. Several factors facilitated their importance. The first was their ties to Iran, whose theocracy supported the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon. The shared ideology precipitated the vast amount of *political and material support* that Iran provided. This source of revenue and supply independent of indigenous means was a great asset, allowing Hezbollah to mobilize more rapidly than if they had had to extract these resources from the local populous.

The second factor facilitating the *ulama's* central role was the use of the Shiite religious establishment. As Kurzman argued in his discussion of organizations being co-opted by social movements, the Shiite hierarchy was uniquely suited for such a role. The fact that the clerical leadership was generally in agreement with the idea of the Islamic State and the repulsion of Israel created favorable organizational opportunity. Its vast network of gathering places and charities, independence from the state, and independent funding from Iran all made for a powerful ally for the movement. A key point is that the hierarchy and Hezbollah remained distinct and separate, though often in close collusion. They were mutually supportive without completely yielding to each other. As in the other two case studies, the *ulama*'s ability to reach the public through preaching was an invaluable tool. In mosques, *Husayniyya*s, funerals, or any other gathering of the faithful, the *ulama* took the opportunity to spread their message and garner support for the effort.[143] Additionally, the Shiite faith provided a robust corpus of symbology to frame the movement, a topic discussed in Chapter IV.

In addition to the effectiveness of the *ulama's* ability to raise support, the importance of Hezbollah's chain-of-command cannot be overemphasized. Using the insurgent's time honored technique of decentralization, Hezbollah adopted a command

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[143] Ibid., 51.

structure consciously designed to resist leadership decapitation. The movement was led by a small committee, with no one person able to decisively affect policy decisions. While it did introduce a degree of inefficiency, it also mitigated the loss posed by any one leader if he should be killed. Such concerns were valid. When the IDF realized the leadership being exercised by the *ulama*, they began a campaign of arrests and assassinations; efforts that proved to be effective for little more than the creation of martyrs.[144]

Hezbollah benefited from a variety of factors during their initial mobilization. The *ulama* were central to the effort. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon and their repressive and seemingly long-term measures created a political opportunity that the radical Shiite clergy capitalized on.

C.   IRAQ: COUNTERING SECULARIZATION; PROTECTING THE FAITH

The Shiite movement in Iraq began around 1960 in the form of the *Da'wah* party. The impetus and initial focus of the *Da'wah*'s activism was the relative decline of the Shiite establishment with respect to the secular state. The Hashemite monarchy, the 'Arif and Qassim regimes, and eventually the Ba'ath regime were all secularly oriented. What religious influence there was derived from the Sunni tradition and Shiite practices were at best ignored, and consciously suppressed in more troubling times. *Da'wah* activists tended to be young and idealistic, throwing off the trappings of traditional political quietism. Until the Iranian revolution the focus of effort was on education and the protection of Shiites practicing their religious obligations, such as the *ashura* processions.

As asserted in the previous chapter, the Shiites of Iraq have historically been fractured politically. Loyalty most often lay with local tribal or religious officials, with the formal *ulama* of the shrine cities playing a fairly minor role in most peoples' day to day religious or political calculus.[145] These cleavages were often exploited by the successive Iraqi regimes to keep the Shiites divided and passive. The *ulama* activists of the *Da'wah* would struggle to overcome these divisions within their potential

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[144] Ibid., 21.

[145] Jabbar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, 63-64.

constituency in an effort to unify the Shiite community and revitalize the practice of their faith. Concern over the future of Shiite religiosity was valid; in the decades prior to 1960 the numbers of seminary students had plummeted, attendance of religious ceremonies was down, and political minded Shiites had been drawn to a variety of socialist or communist parties.[146]

One of the most significant cleavages was the division between the urban and rural Shiites. The urban Shiites were more in tune with orthodox Shi'ism and tended to belong to the merchant class. They sought to distance themselves from the state apparatus as much a practicable, resulting in an under representation in the public sector bureaucracy and officer ranks. Serving a Sunni government was considered an unseemly profession.[147] Rural Shiites were relatively recent converts, most having adopted Shi'ism toward the end of the 19th century. While they were drawn to the comprehensive themes: social justice, anti-government outlook, oppression, Hussein's martyrdom; the rural Shiites had little interest of or knowledge about the loftier intellectual or spiritual aspects of the religion.[148] These two Shiite groups had little contact or interaction until the beginning of a rural to urban migration that started in the early-20th century and continued into the 1960s. The rural Shiites settled in urban slums, particularly those of Baghdad, continuing their separation from their urban coreligionists. A similar migration phenomenon was repeated in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. These communities became the demographic center of Shiite political activism and the primary font of *Da'wah* followers.[149]

Instead of adopting the decentralized, cellular, and informal mobilization structure evident in Bahrain and Lebanon, the Iraqi activists formed along a more hierarchic framework. At the apex was a small committee that guided the movement, but none had enough personal popularity to exercise decisive leadership. Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr was eventually solicited to assume this role. Though relatively young and junior in the

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[146] Hanna Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq: al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah and al-Mujahidin," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest,* ed. Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 188-89.

[147] Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 192.

[148] Ibid., 191.

[149] Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq," 182-83.

Shiite hierarchy, his scholarship was well respected, he was one of the few Arab clerics, no one more senior would accept the position, and most importantly, he was willing.[150]

A fatal division developed, however, in the relationship between Baqir al-Sadr and the *Da'wah* party. Al-Sadr saw in the Iranian revolution an opportunity to lead Iraq into a similar direction. He declared that the *Da'wah* was "going public" and would arm themselves to contest Ba'ath control of the state.[151] The party, Baqir al-Sadr in particular, adopted the philosophy of the *wilayet e-faqih* and sought to bring about its implementation in Iraq. The party leadership became uncomfortable with Baqir al-Sadr's revolutionary leadership and sought to tone down his actions. Being unable to rely on his party activists, Baqir al-Sadr began using his *wukala'* (charity organization) to organize protests and riots. Not to be outdone, *Da'wah* activists then began trying to organize protests as well. A competition emerged between the two organizations; an effort to lead bigger protests than the other groups. Increased competition led both groups to take greater risks, eventually allowing themselves to be compromised by Ba'athist internal security forces. Baqir al-Sadr eventually recognized this danger, but was unable to recover from the error.[152]

The Iraqi movement was effectively destroyed in Iraq (though many activists fled to Iran or the West) due in large part to its hierarchic structure and internal rivalries. The *Da'wah* was fairly successful during the 1960s-70s because the state allowed it to be. While the party was adversarial toward the government, it stayed within certain bounds. As soon as it stepped over the line and began inciting protests to achieve regime change, the state stepped in with brutal repression and destroyed the organization. The indigenous movement never fully recovered. Most prominent activists that survived fled the country and Saddam Hussein effectively used his security apparatus to curtail the movement's reconstitution. If the *Da'wah* had adopted a cellular structure they would have been better able to resist these efforts and could have plausibly survived state repression.

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[150] Jabbar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, 227.

[151] Abdul-Halim al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'wa Islamic Party: Origins, Actors and Ideology," in *Ayatollahs, Sufis, and Ideologues: State, religion and Social Movements in Iraq*, ed. Faleh Abdul-Jabar (London: Saqi Books, 2002), 156.

[152] Jabbar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, 230-32.

D.   CONCLUSION

Mobilization structures are a fundamental factor to the development and sustainability of a social movement. In each of these case studies, the Shiite *ulama* and its hierarchy played a central organizational role. The clerical establishment in each country experienced a sufficient degree of Kurzman's "organizational opportunity," a state in which the organization's leadership is either in favor of adopting a movement's agenda, or is incapable of policing itself so that cooptation does not occur.

The Bahraini movement organized through informal networks associated with religious institutions. Through mosques, *matams*, and study groups, the *ulama* recruited and led their activists. The decentralized organization and intimacy between members made state infiltration particularly difficult. Originally led by disenfranchised elites, the *ulama* co-opted the movement through their superior ability to organize members, provide funding, and frame the political goals in terms that resonated with the masses.

In Lebanon, the Shiites initially mobilized to achieve political representation commensurate with their proportion of the population. As the country descended into the chaos of the civil war, parties and villages developed self-help militias, the precursors of Hezbollah, in order to provide security. A significant number of *ulama* broke from AMAL's tacit acceptance of the Israeli invasion and sought to lead the resistance efforts. They were aided in this effort by an infusion of Iranian *political and material support*, by their ability to effectively draw upon Shiite symbology, and their network of charity organizations that helped win the support of the masses. Unique among this study's cases, Hezbollah's acceptance of Iranian funding allowed rapid mobilization of militants by offering salaries.

In Iraq the *Da'wah* party organized as a result of growing feelings among the *ulama* that the faith was under siege from increasing state-sponsored secularism. Founding members were primarily *ulama* with a substantial minority of pious lay activists. Through the 1960s and 1970s the *Da'wah* primarily worked to protect public religious observances. Not until the Iranian revolution did the *Da'wah* make a concerted effort to gain populist support and lead large anti-regime protests. As a result, the attempt to capitalize upon the inspiration provided by the Iranian revolution lacked wide-spread

initial support, suffered from insufficient resources, and was easily penetrated by state security agents.

Mobilization structures and political opportunity are intertwined, each affecting the other. A particular political opportunity might favor one mobilization structure over others, or vice versa. The addition of framing is necessary to fully explore this dynamic. As Kurzman argues, a robust source of frames makes a particular mobilization structure more attractive to cooptation. Framing, the subject of the next chapter, shapes available mobilization structures and political opportunities, sometimes to the extreme extent of creating or enabling them.

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IV. FRAMING

This chapter examines rhetoric, press releases, ideology, and establishment counter-frames to identify and evaluate the framing strategies used by each movement. Mobilizing symbols are often as important to a social movement as resources. It is these symbols that catch the imagination or sensibilities of neutrals and motivate commitment to changing the status quo. Choosing and properly publicizing these frames are continual struggles for a nascent movement. Tarrow argues that "The major symbolic dilemma of social movements is to mediate between inherited symbols that are familiar, but lead to passivity, and new ones that are electrifying, but may be too unfamiliar to lead to action."[153] Thus, the struggle is to find frames traditional enough to resonate, but radical enough to motivate action; all the while resisting counter-framing from the status quo establishment and competitors.

In all three case studies the opposition adopted the symbols of Shiite Islam. This choice was not necessarily an obvious one; in all the cases the Shiite community was divided by many cleavages, with most people identifying with local issues rather than membership in a larger Shiite community. However, Shiite symbology proved to be an intelligent choice. The history of Shi'ism is rife with the dichotomy between oppressors and oppressed and the deep concern for social justice. Hampered by traditional quietism, Shiite activism began to become accepted through the ideological works of Shari'ati and Khomeini who made a convincing case for actively striving for a better future. As the acknowledged experts in Shiite learning, the *ulama* were in the ideal position to frame the movements in theological terms, greatly expanding the ability of the movement to attract popular support. Moreover, the *ulama* had traditionally been a buffer between the ruling class (the oppressors or the elite) and the masses (the oppressed). Leading an anti-establishment movement could easily be justified within the bounds of their traditional societal role.

Social movements must formulate internal and external frames. Internal frames are those that are targeted at existing organization members and supporters to reinforce

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[153] Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 107.

and continue their support for the movement. External frames are those that are intended to influence non-members, whether foreign states, international public opinion, or the unaligned domestic public. The relative importance of internal and external frames varies between movements. External frames were extremely important for the movement in Bahrain, while internal frames were emphasized in the case of Hezbollah. The *Da'wah* generally did a poor job framing their struggle in Iraq, though what did occur tended to focus on the external. Attracting and retaining members has obvious implications for a social movement, an important factor for success made even more difficult in an oppressive environment where membership carries with it significant risk.

A.   BAHRAIN: IRANIAN PROXIES VS. ANTI-DEMOCRATS

The Shiite *ulama* were the primary providers of opposition rhetoric in Bahrain. They spread their views through the formal medium of sermons and informally through the *matam* system. Shiite imagery became increasingly important as the movement mobilized. The Shiite identity as a persecuted minority and their rich tradition of the oppressor versus the oppressed responded perfectly to the state sponsored repression.

As discussed above, the opposition in Bahrain started as a secular, cross-sectarian movement advocating the restoration of the constitution. The poor economy, its disproportional effect on the Shiite population, and the lack of effective government response acted to catalyze the movement. When combined, this fight against an oppressive Sunni minority for human rights, political representation, and economic prosperity fit neatly into the ideology of the Iranian Revolution.

As the *ulama* became more active in the opposition movement, they increasingly used Shiite terminology and symbolism to frame the struggle. Many of the younger clerics had studied in Iran and had adopted Khomeini's philosophy. [154] Most attractive in the Bahraini context was the idea of Islam as social justice. This played on the traditional Shiite role as a persecuted minority, forced to endure the rapaciousness of the Sunni majority. The idea that one should take action, empowered by religion, to correct this millenarian social injustice, rather than endure it, was revolutionary. Those who perished

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[154] Bahri, "The Socioeconomic Foundations of the Shiite Opposition in Bahrain," 180-81.

as the result of state repression were now martyrs, slain defending their beliefs and striving for a better world.

Though the opposition increasingly framed their effort in religious terms, there was still an effort to appeal to a cross-sectarian audience. The desired end-state never wavered from restoration of the National Assembly as a mechanism for limiting the absolute rule of the Khalifah.[155] Even the radical elements recognized the need for broad based support and at least paid lip service to the inclusive nature of the movement's secular goals. The appeal to moderates is one of the key factors of this movement's success, especially in contrast to the failure of the militant Shiite extremism of the 1980s. During this period, attempts to foment a Shiite uprising were transparently pro-Iranian and failed to address local concerns.[156] Carrying out Iranian foreign policy goals did not appeal to the Bahraini masses, further reinforcing my contention that while Arab Shiites looked to the Iranian revolution as a positive example of revolution and were willing to accept aid, they were not willing to accept Iranian sovereignty. When it emerged in the 1990s, the constitutional movement effectively had no ties with the Islamic republic. The *ulama* disseminated a message that was generally consistent with that of the Iranian revolution, but whose central goals addressed local concerns. The propaganda war between the state and its opposition for the support of moderates would become the decisive battle of the revolt.

The state consistently and adamantly attempted to frame the opposition as an Iranian proxy.[157] The intent was to paint the opposition as a strictly Shiite sectarian movement driven by religious goals. If effective, this would have accomplished several tasks. First, and most importantly, it would solidify the fault line between Sunnis and Shiites, thereby fracturing the broad based support the movement needed. Second, it attempted to exploit cleavages within the Shiite community: Persian versus Arab ethnicity, moderate versus radical. Third, it neatly avoided legitimizing the question of political and economic reform by not responding to them as the point of contention.

[155] Ibid., 181-82.

[156] Rabi and Kostiner, "The Shi'is in Bahrain: Class and Religious Protest," 177.

[157] Ibid.; Stork, "Bahrain's Crisis Worsens," 33-35; Christopher Walker, "Bahrain's Emir in peace talks after riots and sabotage," The Times, LONDON, Apr. 4, 1995.; Thomas Hussain, "Four Killed in Bahrain arson attack," *United Press International*, DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Jun. 13, 1997.

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Advocating Iranian involvement in the international media played off Western fears of Shiite Islamism and preempted protest over the repressive measures used to combat it. In effect, framing the movement as foreign-inspired religious fanaticism gave the state a freer hand to use coercive force.

A key difference between the Bahraini movement and the Lebanese and Iraqi movements was the deliberate use of frames geared toward international opinion. While certainly not absent in Lebanon and Iraq, the Bahrainis, both regime and opposition, continually focused on leveraging international opinion to defeat the others legitimacy and support. The large American footprint, notably the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet Headquarters in Manama, dramatically increased the importance of the movement's outcome to the United States and therefore the importance of each side in gaining American support. The opposition sought to frame their movement as a struggle towards democracy.[158] They were simply disenfranchised minorities seeking to restore their constitutional rights at the expense of a tyrannical minority. They publicly sought to distance themselves from Iranian objectives, continually stressing their commitment to democracy and reform. The regime seized on the Shiite membership of the movement and sought to frame them as Iranian proxies seeking to establish a fundamentalist Islamic state.[159] Knowing that the United States was committed to staunching the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, particularly the Iranian version, they felt that they would have a freer hand to repress the dissidents. International appeals for human rights and democracy would be marginalized by American interests in containing Iran. The Bahraini regime won the framing war. Despite significant publicity from Western non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch, the United States publicly supported the Khalifah regime's suppression efforts and attributed the unrest to Iranian provocation.[160]

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[158] Joe Stork, "Bahrain Regime Stages Confessions, Rejects Compromise," 44-46.

[159] Sue Lloyd-Roberts, "Bahraini rebels reject Emir's tag of fanaticism," *The Times* (London), May 11, 1996.

[160] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Routine Abuse, Routine Denial*, 36-38.

B. LEBANON: TERRORISTS VS. INVADERS

Hezbollah had the difficult task of attracting members in an environment full of competition. During the 1960s-70s, many Lebanese Shiites were attracted to socialist, communist, or other left-leaning organizations. Such ideologies focused on class-warfare, oppression, and social justice, which resonated with Shiite worldviews.[161] Others, sympathizing with their plight, joined Palestinian groups. Musa al-Sadr greatly helped reverse the sectarian entropy and started a trend towards unification of the Lebanese Shiites.[162] The emergence of AMAL lured many away from the leftist groups, though the Shiites continue to be a community with divided loyalties until the present day. The inter-organizational struggle for membership and loyalty of the Shiite community is a defining feature of the Lebanese Shiite movement.

As discussed in the previous chapter, tensions rose between Shiites and Palestinians in South Lebanon through the 1970s and early-1980s. Self-help militias formed that were intended to keep PLO operatives out of Shiite villages so as to prevent IDF reprisals.[163] As the 1982 invasion wore on and it became apparent that the Israelis would not be leaving in the short term, many of these militias formed around the core of more radical young clerics that had broken off of AMAL and were receiving support from Iran. The Palestinian experience taught the Lebanese that fighting was their only hope of maintaining their independence and reclaiming their land.[164] Extrapolating from the example of Israeli treatment of the Palestinians, the Shiites understood that Israel could not be trusted to keep their word if the Lebanese met their terms.

Hezbollah fundamentally defined themselves as Lebanese patriots committed to freeing their nation, culture and religion from the oppression of foreigners.[165] They assert that,

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[161] Norton, "Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon," 160.

[162] Augustus R. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a,* 48-9.

[163] Ibid., 50.

[164] Jabar, *Hezbollah*, 17.

[165] Hezbollah, "Open Letter Addressed by Hizb Allah to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and in the World," in *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, Augustus Richard Norton (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987), 168.

We have opted for religion, freedom, and dignity over humiliation and constant submission to America and its allies and to Zionism and their Phalangist allies. We have risen to liberate our country, to drive the imperialists and the invaders out of it, and to determine our fate by our own hands.[166]

By Hezbollah's calculus, the countries of the world were divided into two camps, the oppressors and the oppressed. The principal oppressors were the United States and the Soviet Union. By the 1980s the superpowers had ceased competing over ideology; both capitalism and socialism had failed to deliver the just society they had promised. Eventually the ideological struggle was subsumed by the struggle for power. The oppressed countries became the prizes in this struggle, taken advantage of, stripped of resources and dignity. The answer to oppression was unity: both of the *umma* among themselves and across religious lines, binding together the world's oppressed.

Hezbollah benefited from a clear definition of organizational objectives. They defined not only their desired end state, but also a more pragmatic proclamation of what they would minimally settle for.[167] The foremost goal was the withdrawal of Israel from Lebanese territory, the Jewish state's destruction, and the liberation of Jerusalem. This would be complimented by withdrawal of all American and allied forces and their influence from the country. The submission of the Phalange to just government and accountability for their crimes against the Lebanese people followed. Lastly, the Lebanese populous would form a government of their choosing, though Hezbollah admittedly favored an Islamic state. The pragmatic goals were effectively less extreme versions of the aforementioned: the complete withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon; domination by neither East nor West; and the formation of a popularly supported government. These objectives masterfully blended tangible and achievable goals with symbols that resonated with both Shiite and Lebanese sensibilities. The genius of this goal was that it was difficult to reject. Who in Lebanon would not want them? This commitment helped Hezbollah achieve a broad support base and paved the way (though not consciously at this point) for entry into the mainstream political scene following the Ta'if accords.

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[166] Hezbollah, "Open Letter," 171.

[167] Hezbollah, "Open Letter," 173-75.

The *ulama* were invaluable in framing Hezbollah's agenda. Hezbollah's core leadership was comprised mostly of young, radical, and energetic clerics.[168] Most had studied in Najaf contemporaneously with Khomeini's residence and were dedicated to his philosophy. This had several effects. First, Khomeini's renunciation of traditional quietism encouraged his followers to take an active role in bringing about an Islamic state. The success of the Iranian revolution proved the feasibility of establishing such a state and Iranian support provided the means.

Second, these young *ulama* had a self-conscious framing strategy. Their task was to overcome Tarrow's dilemma of symbology. That is, they had to find symbols traditional enough to resonate with their constituency but radical enough to motivate action. They explicitly sought to radicalize their followers through broad, uncontroversial themes.[169] From its inception, Hezbollah's *raison d'être* was the defeat of the IDF in Lebanon and the destruction of the Israeli state. If there is one thing everyone in the Arab world can agree on, it is opposition to Israel. Additionally, with the exception of the Maronites, the Lebanese public certainly did not welcome the Israeli invasion. By framing their movement in these broad and generally acceptable terms, Hezbollah created conditions that encouraged popular support that would have been absent had they been advocating strictly Shiite goals.

In the beginning, Hezbollah's leadership was focused on radicalizing the public, promoting and channeling their outrage toward the IDF. Incitement of emotions rather than intellectual argument was the goal.[170] Hezbollah's activist *ulama* core constantly spread their message in mosques, *Husayniyya*s, and funerals, anywhere they could find a crowd. The very fact that it was the *ulama* leading the movement created frames. The clergy was traditionally the buffer between ruler and the ruled, the guarantor of social justice. That they were so active put considerable legitimacy behind the effort.

The complex and monumental figure of Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah has been an important factor in the framing of Hezbollah's message. Though never directly involved in Hezbollah's command apparatus, Fadlallah is often referred to

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[168] Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 101.

[169] Jabar, *Hezbollah*, 49-50.

[170] Ibid., 49.

as the organization's "spiritual guide." Considered the most senior *'alim* in Lebanon, Fadlallah possesses significant theological credibility and the vast resources of his charity organization. His support for Hezbollah's goals lends legitimacy to the organization among his constituents, many of whom might otherwise be wary of Shiite political Islam.[171] Fadlallah, though an outspoken critic of Israel and the United States, advocates dialogue with other sectarian groups including Sunni Muslims and Christians in order to resolve Lebanon's problems. This in effect moderates the movement. Additionally, he concedes that an Islamic state is not viable in the extremely heterogeneous Lebanese context.[172] This stance facilitated what is perhaps his greatest contribution to the Shiite movement, that of internal framing. Fadlallah's vast credibility enabled Hezbollah to retain its radical members while also allowing the organization to move toward the center enough to attract secular and moderate supporters.

Since 1992-93 there has been a divergence between Fadlallah and Hezbollah.[173] The centerpiece of their disagreement is over recognition of 'Ali Khamenei as Ayatollah Khomeini's successor. Hezbollah officially recognized Khamenei as their religious authority, a stance understandable in light of the party's reliance on Iranian support. On the other hand, Fadlallah refuses to recognize Khamenei, instead he asserted his own claim as *marja' taqlid* and endeavored to build his own base of support. The disagreement between Fadlallah and Tehran has motivated Hezbollah to distance itself, though they remain on reasonably good terms and share many common interests.

Hezbollah gained a great deal of credibility through their social welfare programs. As an organization whose self-professed goal was the establishment of an Islamic state, Hezbollah considered social programs to be both a religious obligation as well as an effective tool to build support and influence among the masses.[174] The Lebanese Civil War decimated the country's infrastructure. The Lebanese state, never possessing a

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[171] Harik, *Hezbollah*, 61.

[172] Shaykh Muhammad Hussayn Fadlallah and Mahmoud Soueid, "Islamic Unity and Political Change. Interview with Shaykh Muhammad Hussayn Fadlallah," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 1 (1995): 61-75.

[173] International Crisis Group, *Hizbollah: Rebel Without A Cause?* (Amman/Brussels: International Crisis Group, July 2003), 12-13.

[174] Harik, *Hezbollah*, 82-86.

significant ability to penetrate into society, became completely impotent. Hezbollah stepped into this vacuum and eventually became the most capable provider of public services in the country. Though their motives were certainly rooted in the Muslim traditions of charity and caring for the community, the move toward public services was formulated to attract public and state support for their other activities, most importantly their armed struggle against Israel. Unlike Islamic charity organizations in many other countries that attempt to use their influence to supplant and delegitimize the state, Hezbollah uses their social work to solidify their place within the Lebanese political apparatus.[175] It is a tool to reinforce their legitimacy within the system rather than an attempt to overthrow it. Aiding the common people further reinforces Hezbollah's Islamist credentials as a charity organization seeking to improve the lives of the people.

An important factor for successful framing is an efficient mechanism for conveying one's story to the public. Various media, each with their own pros and cons, are often the most expeditious method to reach large audiences quickly, but assuring favorable coverage is problematic. Media outlets have their own motives, tending to cover issues the public is interested in. As issues gain or lose the public interest the media varies its coverage.[176] Hezbollah neatly avoided this problem by establishing its own media outlets, including television, radio, and newspapers.[177] Through these fora the party could provide its own views on any given subject to a large number of viewers, both offering sympathetic coverage to their own projects while deriding the opposition's. Hezbollah leadership is able to make public announcements to advocate or explain their positions, an option that is particularly rare among opposition movements.

Hezbollah proved itself to be extremely astute in its framing strategy. This effort was aided by the party's simple and generally popular mission statement: drive Israel from Lebanese soil. A combination of nationalist and religious symbols was drawn upon to frame their struggle. Shiites were attracted to the eternal search for social justice and the battle of the oppressed against the oppressors. To the international community

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[175] Ibid., 80.

[176] Mayer N. Zald, "Culture, ideology and strategic framing," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, ed., Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 270.

[177] Harik, *Hezbollah*, 160-61.

Hezbollah attempted to frame their struggle as a war of national liberation, the right of national self-determination being considered an important and inalienable right.[178] Similar to the Bahraini example, religious symbols were drawn upon to facilitate the achievement of what is essential a secular goal, the control over a given territory.

C.   IRAQ: BA'ATHIST ATHEISM VS. PERSIAN EXTREMISTS

The Iraqi Shiite movement was focused in the intellectual and religious schools of the shrine cities, the *hawza.* The Iraqi movement was similar to that of Bahrain in that the disenfranchised majority was seeking political rights. Unlike Bahrain the Iraqi movement lacked clear and specific objectives. The *ulama* in Iraq was seeking to lead a reform of the Shiite community, bringing them back to their roots and protecting them from dangerous yet seductive secular ideologies. As the Iraqi regime became increasingly confrontational, the Shiite movement, in the form of the *Da'wah* party, sought to protect Shiite religious observances and movement members from persecution. It was only in the weeks and months following the successful Iranian revolution that the *Da'wah* and Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr were able to truly mobilize mass support and demonstrations for political objectives.

As discussed in previous chapters, the Iraqi *Da'wah* party was founded to combat the declining role of the Shiite *ulama*, and Shiite religion generally, in Iraqi society.[179] Absent a unified theory to explain their substandard status in the increasingly secular and Sunni dominated Iraqi state, many Shiites were attracted to the Communist Party with their focus on equality and social justice. The Communist refrain of the oppressed rising up to overthrow the oppressors resonated with Shiite sensibilities. This trend encouraged the *ulama* to take a more active political role if they wished to retain their status as leaders in their community. This advocacy can also be viewed as part of the broader movement in the Muslim world during the 1950s and 1960s to combat the growing secularization of the region.

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[178] For example, Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "Hezbollah Stresses Purpose of Resistance," BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, October 28, 1992.

[179] Keiko Sakai, "Modernity and Tradition and the Islamic Movements in Iraq: Continuity and Discontinuity in the Role of the Ulama," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 23, No. 1 (Winter 2001): 38.

The Shiite movement in Iraq relied almost exclusively upon the intellectual foundation created by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr.[180] His two major works, *Our Philosophy* (1959) and *Our Economics* (1961), attempted to offer Muslims an alternative to the capitalist and communist paradigms.[181] In particular, the works focus on refuting communism, his major competitor for constituents. This theory was universalist, providing a compelling, intellectually rigorous, and complete world view that could lead Muslims out from domination by "East and West."

Through the 1960s and 1970s the *Da'wah* framed its agenda as that of reformer; the straight path to a just society was through Islam arguing that the promises of capitalism and communism were false and merely an extension of foreign attempts to dominate the Muslim world. Their ultimate goals were to recruit and train activists, overthrow the corrupt Iraqi regime, establish a just Islamic state, and then export their success throughout the *umma*.[182] In practice however, this ambitious agenda was only modestly implemented. The focus during the 1960s was primarily on education and recruitment.

Periodicals were the primary means of disseminating the party's views to the public during this era. Sadr wrote editorials in the *al-Adwa* journal, a mouthpiece for the leadership of the Shiite hierarchy. More radical was the *Da'wah's* official, but illegal, journal *Sawt al-Da'wah*. During the Arif regime (1964-68) the Shiites were generally free from state persecution and *Da'wah* membership dramatically increased. These recruits were mostly drawn from university students and intelligentsia. This group remained the core constituency of the *Da'wah* until the Iranian revolution. The party never really was able to achieve populist support in the form of widespread activism.

Much of Sadr's rhetoric and labor was focused on the reform of the *Marja'iya,* the Shiite religious hierarchy. Though possessing a loose structure, the system was based upon personal loyalties and the charismatic leadership of the most senior scholars. There

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[180] Hanna Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'i Movements" *MERIP Reports*, No. 102 (Jan., 1982), 3.

[181] Chibli Mallat, "Religious militancy in contemporary Iraq: Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr and the Sunni-Shia paradigm," *Third World Quarterly* 10, No. 2 (Spring 1988): 706.

[182] Talib Aziz, "The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shii Political Activism in Iraq from 1958 to 1980," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, No. 2 (May 1993): 209.

was no way outside of personal persuasion for senor leadership to disseminate and more importantly enforce edicts upon junior clerics. As a result, the *ulama* tended to struggle as much internally for prestige and influence as they did externally against the state. As a whole, the *ulama* had difficulty publicizing their agenda to the public because there was no coherent policy since every influential *'alim* promoted his own agenda. Sadr sought to institutionalize the system, creating a series of qualifications, required curricula, and merit-based promotions to advance within the hierarchy in lieu of the *ad hoc* and uneven system that was in place.[183] Sadr's establishment of the Usul al-Din College in Baghdad, though short-lived, was an attempt to inculcate these values in seminary students.

The Shiite movement began to gain momentum in the mid 1970s. State repression of religious observances, such as the 1977 crackdown on a procession of pilgrims traveling between Najaf and Karbala, outraged many Shiites and prompted mass protests.[184] The Iranian revolution in 1978-79 fanned the flames of protest, further radicalizing the movement. Sadr's reputation and popularity grew significantly in light of the Iranian revolution. He was known for his scholarship and support of the *wilayet e-faqih*, though the nuances of his theological disagreements with Khomeini were not widely publicized. Furthermore, Sadr's popular appeal was enhanced by Iran's Arab language radio station endorsing his rule, calling him the "Khomeini of Iraq."[185] This widespread popularity compounded with his support from Iran's revolutionary government made Sadr the Iraqi regime's most dangerous adversary and eventually led to his execution.

As the Iranian revolution took hold, tension grew between the Ba'ath regime and the Shiite community, culminating in a winner-take-all struggle for state control. The state used several tactics to critically weaken the Shiite movement. Saddam Hussein attempted to derail the *ulama*'s claims of Ba'athist atheism with several statements regarding religion. Hussein's argument was that though the Ba'ath party was secular, its members were certainly believers; this was essentially an argument for separation of

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[183] Sakai, "Modernity and Tradition and the Islamic Movements in Iraq," 42.

[184] Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq," 194.

[185] Ibid.

religion and government.[186] Further, he argued that the forces attempting to destabilize his government were merely using religion as cover for their political agenda. In this way the movement was not religiously motivated, rather the trappings of religion had been hijacked in what amounted to a power grab.[187] One of the most significant aspects of Ba'ath counter-framing was the shift to calling Iraqi Shiites Persians.[188] The Iraqi regime considered Shiite sympathy for the Iranian Revolution an internal threat. In light of the increasing tension and eventual hostilities with revolutionary Iran, describing their adversaries as Persian, despite the fact that many had lived in Iraq for generations, helped foster public support for repression. Many so-called "non-Arabs" were expelled from the *hawza* at government insistence, and through the Iran-Iraq War many were deported.

The leadership of the *Da'wah* became invigorated by the success of the Iranian revolution and came to believe that a similar event could be carried out in Iraq.[189] In the event, swift and brutal state repression decisively destroyed popular Shiite activism in Iraq. Activists who were not killed fled in mass, mostly to Iran. Political opportunity certainly existed in the wake of the Iranian revolution that could have been successfully exploited. Strong external support from Iran and the internal Ba'ath power struggle set in place favorable conditions. In the battle to mobilize resources, however, the Shiite movement failed. By not framing their argument effectively, the broad support for their movement was lacking until the last moment. What resulted were basically semi-organized mobs, incapable of standing up to the relatively disciplined regime forces.

Additionally, little effort was made to garner international support. Following the ascent of the Ba'ath and the ensuing confrontation with the *hawza*, several *ulama* were dispatched to garner foreign support, but most of these delegations were sent to Shiite leaders such a Musa al-Sadr in Lebanon.[190] While influential in the global Shiite

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[186] Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, 214.

[187] Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq," 195.

[188] Ali Babakhan, "The Deportation of Shi'is During the Iran-Iraq War: Causes and Consequences," in *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, religion and Social Movements in Iraq*, ed. Faleh Abdul-Jabar (London: Saqi Books, 2002), 187.

[189] al-Ruhaimi, "The Da`wa Islamic Party," 156.

[190] Aziz, "The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr," 212.

community, these leaders were incapable of bringing significant pressure against the Iraqi regime.

During the 1980s and 1990s the Shiite opposition movement operated in exile.[191] The *Da'wah* resided in Iran for most of the Iran-Iraq War, though they increasingly moved to Western countries following the Gulf War of 1990-91. By associating closely with Iran the Shiite movement made further framing missteps. Although the Shiites still living in Iraq generally opposed the Ba'ath regime, they also opposed Iranian domination and influence, thereby delegitimizing the exiles in many eyes.[192] The strong emotions resulting from the seizure and hostage situation of the United States embassy during the Iranian revolution caused knee jerk opposition in the West to anything associated with Iran. By their close association with Iran the exiles colored their perception in the West and the rest of the international community.

D.   CONCLUSION

The relationship between political opportunity, mobilization structures, and framing is interactive and interdependent, with changes in one area affecting the others. Indeed, the lines between the factors themselves are often blurred, making it difficult at times to definitively ascertain whether an event is one or the other. In many cases both are true. Without a sufficient degree of success in each area, however, a movement is doomed to failure.

The three case studies that have been discussed realized varied levels of success in their framing. Hezbollah was arguably the most successful; the Party of God implemented a self-conscious framing strategy that portrayed the movement as one of Lebanese patriotism and resistance to invasion motivated by religion. Furthermore, the movement seems to have survived its greatest challenge, military success, by redefining itself as a political participant rather than an outside challenger. The Bahraini movement was also quite successful; the movement remained true to its initial objective of regaining political influence. Though led by *ulama* and often framed in Shiite symbology, the

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[191] Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, 235, 264.

[192] Ibid., 254.

movement retained cross-sectarian support by clinging firmly to its secular political objectives. The *Da'wah* failed in Iraq largely due to its inability to provide the public with a convincing platform until it was too late to mobilize sufficient resources to challenge the state. In effect, the Iranian revolution provided both an example and an effective framing scheme, but the disorganized Iraqi *ulama* was unable to capitalize on these. The Iraqis did not sufficiently overcome Tarrow's framing dilemma.

Wiktorowicz asserts that successful framing, "…must articulate and disseminate frameworks of understanding that resonate with potential participants and broader publics to elicit collective action."[193] Shiite Islam has a rich tradition associated with oppression, social justice, and legitimacy of government. This robust corpus of symbology provided an excellent way to frame opposition movements primarily composed of Shiites. The key obstacle to overcome with this approach was the tradition of political quietism on the part of the *ulama*. Khomeini's doctrine of the *wilayet e-faqih* provided an answer to Tarrow's dilemma that provided symbols traditional enough to resonate, but radical enough to provoke action. Traditional arguments resonated, but without the change in intellectual direction affected by the Khomeini, and to a lesser extent Shari'ati, Shiite symbols would have only reinforced the status quo.

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[193] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed., Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 15.

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V.   CONCLUSION

The rise of political Islam has been as influential in the Shiite world as in the Sunni. In contrast to those, the Shiite movements are led by the religious hierarchy rather then by the anti-establishment lay activists so dominant in Sunni movements. The Shiite *ulama* have become much more involved in the political realm, beginning in the 1960s-70s with the articulation of the new ideology that empowered the Iranian Revolution. Though a significant portion of the *ulama* retained their quietist tradition, enough felt motivated by the renunciation of *entezar* and the value of the *wilayet e-faqih* to become a major force in the political landscape.

Several factors encouraged the *ulama* to become the core leadership of the movements examined in this study: the *ulama's* traditional role of protector; their mastery of Shiite history and law; their *in situ* organization and hierarchy; and the example of Iran.[194] The *ulama* were the legitimate voice of dissent against regimes that deviated from the course proscribed by their faith. The *ulama* were historically a buffer between ruler and subject, ensuring that their flock was adequately protected from elite excesses. The clerics fell into, and were accepted in, this role. Shiites assert that the only legitimate sovereign is God. The Imams, as God's infallible representatives on Earth, exercised religious and temporal authority in His name. Following the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, the Shiite community was left without a clear leader. The *ulama* have asserted that by virtue of their religious study, they are the best, if fallible, guides to lead the community in accordance with the dictates of God.[195]

For most of history, however, the *ulama's* assertion of this power was restricted to a few specific areas such as guardianship for orphans, the handicapped, and widows. Temporal authority of non-clerics was tacitly accepted, as long as the ruler restricted his actions within the bounds of Islamic law. Only in rare instances, such as Iran's Tobacco Revolt (1891-92) or resistance to the British invasion of Iraq during the First World War, have the *ulama* directly involved themselves in politics. In these and similar cases the

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[195] Momen, An Introduction to Shi'i Islam, 193.

perception was that the *ulama* was acting to counter the regime's exploitation of their followers. Khomeini's doctrine of the *wilayet e-faqih* threw off this self-imposed limitation and asserted that despite their fallibility, the *ulama* were the most legitimate leaders available. While many prominent *ulama* did not completely subscribe to Khomeini's doctrine, it did play a significant role in opening the door for clerical involvement in political activism.

The *ulama*'s mastery of Shiite law, history, and tradition provided significant potential for their emergence as a powerful political group. Since every Shiite is required to choose and follow a specific *marja*'s rulings, the *ulama*'s authority to declare actions obligatory can have a forceful effect.[196] Reaction to a *marja*'s *fatwas* can certainly vary; depending on a follower's degree of devotion or other pragmatic factors, he may or may not actively obey the ruling. Nevertheless, the issuance of *fatwas* tends to place the religious leadership on the moral high ground and makes it difficult for lay opponents to justify their opposition. The contribution of the *ulama* to the framing of a movement was considerable. Not only were they knowledgeable about the history and symbology to draw from, through their sermons and writings they were practiced in choosing issues that resonated with their target audience. Additionally, the Shiite *ulama* had maintained its credibility with the public. Unlike the Sunni *ulama*, the Shiite jurists were independent from the state, and were therefore not compromised by close association with repressive regimes. The hierarchy enjoyed varying degrees of fiscal autonomy that enabled them to fund activism without the regime's knowledge or support.

The Shiite hierarchy's *in situ* organization gave the *ulama* a significant advantage over possible rivals for the leadership of their movements. A significant precursor for a successful social movement is the ability to mobilize resources faster than one's opponent.[197] The robust infrastructure of mosques, mourning houses (*matams* or *Husayniyyas)*, and charity organizations provided the *ulama* relatively safe meeting places and the ability to tangibly help needy constituents. The Friday sermon often became a forum for mobilization, giving the *ulama* access to a large number of sympathetic people that could be influenced by their views.

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[196] Linda S. Walbridge, "Introduction: Shi'ism and Authority" 4-5.

[197] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Introduction: Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," 10.

The most effective motivator for new recruits to join opposition movements in an authoritarian context is friendship with a current member.[198] Prayer and study groups were excellent conduits for the creation of these informal networks of recruitment. Such meetings enjoyed the advantage of being an acceptable form of association even when most other venues for public gathering were banned or strictly regulated. Additionally, since these groups were generally small and composed of members who knew each other, infiltration by government agents was difficult.

The example of Iran had a fundamental impact on all three movements. Its major contribution was as a *demonstration effect*. The Islamic Revolution demonstrated that a social movement could overcome a powerful and authoritarian ruler, even one with superpower support. The Iranian ideology encouraged the pious to renounce quietism and take active steps to achieve a just society. In this context the *ulama* were the obvious choice to lead the effort. After all, the successful Iranian experiment was led by the clergy. This view is, of course, oversimplified and flawed. The abortive Iraqi and early-Bahraini (during the 1980s) attempts to incite *ulama* led resurrection failed to take into account the complex web of facilitators present in the Iranian revolution, but absent in the Bahraini and Iraqi socio-political contexts. The Bahraini movement in particular was too closely associated with Iranian motives to attract local interest.[199] In neither case was the public willing to accept Iranian domination, even if doing so perpetuated their grievances. Simply, the *ulama* had to capitalize on existing societal grievances and mobilize a wide variety of public support focused into productive action by an effective organization. The two examples of failure were little more than *ulama* led riots, incapable of sustaining themselves.

Given this discussion so far, it seems that the *ulama* are the indispensable leaders of Shiite social movements. As well respected members of their community, who traditionally have a legal and leadership role, and who usually have significant resources at their disposal, the *ulama*'s emergence as opposition leaders is not surprising. Several factors, however, counter the aforementioned positives and mitigate the ability of the

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[198] Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel*, 74.

[199] Rabi and Kostiner, "The Shi'is in Bahrain: Class and Religious Protest," 177.

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ulama to exercise decisive control of their communities: their loose hierarchy, vulnerability to state repression, and their traditional role in the eyes of the people.

While the religious hierarchy is an advantage for the *ulama* with respect to possible competitors, its loose nature makes it a liability as well. The competition between leading *mujtahids* to attract followers and enforce their claim to be the supreme jurist, the *Marja' taqlid,* is the centerpiece of this struggle. Personal charisma plays an important role in this dynamic; the process of *marja'* selection is fluid and resists institutionalization.[200] On the surface the process is simple. A *mujtahid* who desires to become recognized as a *marja'* publishes his *risala,* a commentary that delineates his legal opinion on a variety of issues. All that remains is attracting followers, who express their commitment by offering alms, and the general acceptance of his peers. Though religious scholarship matters for a *marja's* reputation, his relative position is often estimated by the number of his followers.[201] Attaining consensus regarding one's preeminence is difficult. Walbridge notes that even during the zenith of Ayatollah Khomeini's popularity, most Shiites followed Ayatollah Kho'i of Najaf. This fierce competition among *marjas* can also be seen in the disagreement between Ayatollahs Fadlallah and Khamenei for the leadership of Lebanon's Shiites.[202] Hezbollah aligned with Khamenei out of concern for the continuance of Iranian financial support, while most other Shiites, and unofficially many of Hezbollah's members, followed Fadlallah. The charisma-based system of consensus makes enforcing policy on subordinates difficult. In this way the *marja'*, while certainly a figure of power, is limited to actions he can convince others to follow. This makes swift action difficult since consensus by its nature takes time. This factor is a significant limitation on the movement's ability to counter external threats.

The religious hierarchy and infrastructure can be vulnerable to state repression. As discussed above, the *marja'* is a public figure who must attract supporters. Even when the *marja'* himself is isolated, followers acting on his behalf must fulfill his duties to provide guidance to the public. The public nature of the position exposes the clerics to the

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[200] Linda S. Walbridge, "The Counterreformation: Becoming a Marja' in the Modern World," 241.

[201] Walbridge, "Shi'ism and Authority," 5.

[202] International Crisis Group, *Hizbollah: Rebel Without A Cause?* 13-14.

state's repressive apparatus. The physical infrastructure, mosques and the like, are vulnerable to the state as well. The Ba'ath regime in Iraq for instance, seized property belonging to the religious hierarchy and interjected itself into the operation of the *hawza* to combat the growing influence of the Shiite *ulama*.[203] In Lebanon, the IDF targeted leading clerics for execution in an attempt to decapitate Hezbollah's resistance movement.[204] A similar campaign of clerical persecution and arrests occurred in Bahrain.[205] While *ulama* are fairly easy targets for repression, the regime's efforts are usually ineffective. The decentralized nature of the Shiite hierarchy, though a hindrance to efficient command and control, also safeguards against decapitation.

Compounding the difficulty of *ulama*-led social movements is that the *wilayet e-faqih* was never broadly accepted. Traditionalists like Ayatollahs Kho'i and Sistani never considered the doctrine to be legitimate and held to their belief of clerical aloofness from politics.[206] Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr agreed with Khomeini's doctrine in principle, but sought to institutionalize the office in line with modern bureaucratic organization.[207] In this way the *marja'iya* would be able to overcome many of the organizational problems discussed above that impair their ability to gain consensus and act decisively.

Fadlallah also agreed with the *wilayet e-faqih* in theory, but had reservations. First, he was concerned that the reliance on charismatic leadership placed the focus on the leader himself rather than his message.[208] Sadr's organizational reforms could be seen as a way to mitigate this weakness. More importantly, Fadlallah pragmatically accepted that an Islamic state according to the Iranian model was impractical and unrealistic with Lebanon's heterogeneous populous.[209] Fadlallah's major contribution is his view that the *marja'iya* and the *wilayet e-faqih* should be separate.[210] He argues that multiple *wilaya*

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[203] Aziz, "The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shii Political Activism" 211-12.

[204] Hala Jabar, *Hezbollah*, 21.

[205] Human Rights Watch/Middle East, *Routine Abuse, Routine Denial,* 16.

[206] Walbridge, "Shi'ism and Authority," 6.

[207] John Walbridge, "Muhammad-Baqir al-Sadr: The Search for New Foundations," 143-147.

[208] Talib Aziz, "Fadlallah and the Remaking of the Marja'iya," 206.

[209] Muhammad Hussayn Fadlallah, "Muhammad Hussayn Fadlallah: The Palestinians, the Shi'a, and South Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, No. 2 (Winter 1987): 6.

[210] Aziz, "Fadlallah and the Remaking of the Marja'iya," 212-13.

are permissible, with each jurist holding political authority in separate states. The *marja'iya*, however, would be the religious and symbolic leader of the entire *umma.*

Over time the Iranian Revolution and the *wilayet e-faqih* have lost their appeal. The Shiite *ulama* assert their authority through their mastery of the massive corpus of religious law and tradition. Their legitimacy is claimed and, "…believed in on the basis of the sanctity of the order and the attendant powers of control as they have been handed down from the past…"[211] While there is some flexibility inherent in the *ulama*'s ability to exercise *ijtihad*, or interpretation of the religious law, a *mujtahid* that exceeds traditional constraints effectively undermines his own legitimacy and that of the religious institution. Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of the *wilayet e-faqih* is a classic example of overstepping the bonds of tradition. However, Khomeini was able to exert effective charismatic authority, thereby overcoming the delegitimizing effect of radical divergence from tradition. This charismatic authority manifested as the complete personal devotion imparted to Khomeini by those who recognized his divine mission.[212] The important factor is that loyalty was to the person Ruhollah Khomeini and not his position as a *mujtahid.* By using charismatic authority to achieve non-traditional objectives, as was the case of an *ulama*-run theocracy, Khomeini undermined the legitimacy of the religious hierarchy.

The arbitrary promotion of lesser *ulama* to high office, along with a commensurate increase in religious rank, is an extraordinary example of this phenomenon. Following Khomeini's death, there existed no *marja'* capable of asserting similar charismatic authority. Ali Khamenei eventually succeeded Khomeini as the Supreme Leader, despite having been elevated from the office of *hojat al-islam* to Ayatollah just prior to his ascension.[213] Khamenei had not published any of the scholarly works normally required to become an Ayatollah; his religious credentials were lacking. Had Khamenei exhibited the charisma of his predecessor, bypassing the traditional qualification process would have been a minor impediment. However, without the appeal of charismatic authority, Khamenei was forced to fall back on the prestige of his position

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[211] Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 341.

[212] Ibid., 359.

[213] Walbridge, "The Counterreformation," 235.

as an Ayatollah, a resort to traditional authority, the very force that his promotion undermined.

Given the natural leadership potential of the *ulama* and the chronic underlying grievances present in each case study, the question remains, Why now? Why did these social movements erupt at that specific point of time? A definitive inquiry of that question is beyond the scope of this study, I will however, briefly speculate. Several economic policies on the part of the Khalifah regime exacerbated Bahrain's chronic grievances into acute protest.[214] During the early-1990s the government rewarded elite business owners by subsidizing the construction of large, Western-style shopping centers. This had the effect of hurting small business owners and hindering privately-funded construction projects that could not compete against state subsidization. Additionally, state aid packages intended to help the development of domestic industry went to companies that outsourced jobs to immigrant workers instead of the local working class. Similarly, the government aided the wrong sector for development, focusing on light industry rather than heavy industry; a decision that cost many working class Shiites their employment. Finally, Bahraini women had entered the workforce during the 1980s and received significant education and training. During the early 1990s, the regime, worried about Islamist inroads into the female population, reduced support for these programs. As a result of these economic policies, the unemployment rate among the lower classes, particularly among Shiites, grew significantly. The arrest of prominent Shiite *ulama* in 1994 triggered the frustration on the part of the lower classes and resulted in mass protest.

The mobilization of Lebanon's Shiites is straight forward. The increasingly disproportionate Shiite representation in the Lebanese government came to the fore by the early-1970s as a source of significant grievance.[215] When the increasingly fragile National Pact became subject to the pressure of the PLO's arrival en masse following "Black September" 1970, the system eventually failed, leading to collapse and civil war, beginning in 1975. Like other confessional groups, the Shiites armed themselves for self-defense and to guard their interests. The 1978 and 1982 Israeli invasions provided a

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[214] Lawson, "Repertoires of Contention in Contemporary Bahrain," 91-4.

[215] Norton, "Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon," 157-58, 167.

catalyst for the creation of Hezbollah and its emergence as a power center.[216] The invasion of their land, by an enemy who had already conquered and displaced the Palestinians, prompted armed resistance.

In Iraq, the *ulama* initially mobilized, through the founding of the *Da'wah* party, in order to combat the increasing secularization of the Shiite laity. Through the 1960s until the mid-1970s, the perpetuation of a Shiite revival and attempts to protect the rights of religious observance dominated *Da'wah* activities. The uprising led by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr with the intent of overthrowing the Ba'ath regime by following the Iranian model, was a perfect example of Kurzman's mismatch between structural and perceived political opportunity. Failing to recognize Iran's *sui generis* experience as such, Sadr perceived greater political opportunity than existed, with disastrous results.

The Shiite *ulama* will not attempt to install Iranian-style Islamic regimes in countries they dominate. Iran's example was a key factor in Shiite social mobilization throughout the Middle East following the revolution. Today, Iran's example as a twenty-five year long experiment in Islamic government is just as powerful and generally viewed as a failure. The leading Shiite jurists seem to have realized that they can wield much more influence by staying out of politics directly, instead acting as a powerful interest group more or less behind the scenes. As the Iranian case demonstrates, directly assuming political office opens one to the inevitable criticism and association with failed or unpopular policies. A better path would be to assume the traditional role of the *ulama*: scholars that provide advice to lay officials who govern in accordance with the requirements of religious law.

The developments in post-Ba'ath Iraq provide an excellent example of this dynamic. Few would argue that Ayatollah Sistani has been apolitical since the fall of Saddam Hussein. He was the driving force behind holding general elections before the constitution was written.[217] His opposition to this forced the Coalition Provisional Authority to change its stated plans and hold elections for the National Assembly that will be responsible for writing the constitution. The Ayatollah also issued a statement

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[216] Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah,* 15.

[217] Edward Wong, "Leading Shiite clerics in Najaf voice strong approval of voting," *The International Herald Tribune*, February 1, 2005.

asserting that it was every Iraqi's obligation to legally register and vote in the election.[218] Sistani is also credited with convincing Shiites to show restraint by not retaliating against Sunnis for terrorist attacks against their communities.[219] This restraint diffuses the attempts of insurgents to incite a sectarian-based civil war in Iraq. Despite what can only be considered significant influence, Ayatollah Sistani does not seek political office for himself or the religious hierarchy generally. He states that,

> The Supreme *Marja'iya* is by no means whatsoever looking to establish itself as a political authority in Iraq...The Supreme *Marja'iya* always transcends political parties and groups. It safeguards the interests of religion and guides those who distance themselves from the *Marja'iya* to the right path.[220]

This statement succinctly argues the position of the traditional *ulama,* that their role is to protect the interests of religion and advise those who govern.

The lesson for U.S. policy is that Iranian-style governments are not an imminent threat anywhere in the Shiite world. The *ulama* have generally learned from the negative example of Iran and realized that they are able to exercise power much more effectively as a separate and highly respected institution rather than hold office directly. The *ulama* are an extremely influential center of power in the Shiite community, wielding vast moral authority, the ability to mobilize significant resources, and mastery of symbols and framing that resonate with their constituency. Despite this considerable influence, the *ulama* is also severely constrained. Drawing their authority from a rich and complex tradition, they are unable to deviate radically from that tradition's doctrine without undermining their legitimacy. In hindsight it is possible to consider the *wilayet e-faqih* an example of the *ulama* overstepping tradition to their detriment. Though arguably justifiable within the bounds of Shiite theology, in practice it diverged too far from the expectations of the Shiite community. In response, recent events demonstrate a return to the *ulama*'s customary and accepted role.

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[218] Ayatollah Ali Sistani, "The latest statement concerning Iraq election," October 1, 2004, http://www.sistani.org/messages/eng/ente.htm (accessed May 11, 2005).

[219] "Sistani's prize," *Mideast Mirror*, May 4, 2005.

[220] Ayatollah Ali Sistani, "The communiqué issued by the supreme religious authority of the Shia world, His Eminence Ayatullah Al-Udhma al-Sayyid al-Sistani (Dama Dhiluh), on the current situation in Iraq," April 18, 2003, http://www.sistani.org/messages/eng/ir2.htm (accessed May 11, 2005).

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